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*Professor Lovdahl*

*by*

*Alexander Kielland*





# *Professor Lovdahl*

*Translated from the Nor-  
wegian of Alexander  
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*Professor Lovdahl*



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### I

Abraham Lovdahl had entered the University. Nineteen years old, handsome, healthy, and gay, well dressed and well provided with money, life burst upon him like the entrance to a ballroom and he rushed in with wondering eyes.

At that time there still lingered about student life the fast disappearing glimmer of a delightful and untroubled past; "ideals" could still be discussed without calling forth a general laugh; and when the president of the students' club—his pretty, blond head thrown back—sent his clear voice resounding with fair words through the hall, his youthful hearers, with swelling breasts, felt as if mighty wings were encircling them, lifting them from earth and bearing them away.

Abraham Lovdahl, too, had known the growth of wings; the sudden transition from the monotony and restrictions of his colorless school days to golden freedom among strangers intoxicated him like wine. He had now realized all the charm of student life, whose anticipated pleasures had filled him with longing during the weary school hours. He was not conscious of the ground upon which he trod, but soared,

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surrounded by friends, in the light of fair words and ardent emotions.

Until plucked of his plumage.

For there is always—in clubs and restaurants and certain haunts—a group of clever men who live to pluck youth, not for gain, but for the shining plumage to be found upon them. These are superior intellects; they know everything and have experienced most things. There is nothing in heaven or on earth they have not turned into a joke; and after Abraham had enjoyed an established place among them for a year, he, too, was able to laugh at everything, cocksure, without interest, sated, plucked.

Then he plunged into society where he was a great success and soon became engaged to a daughter of Judge Meinhardt. It came about quite naturally, for Mrs. Meinhardt determined it should be so; and Abraham was happy beyond measure. His sweetheart was, no doubt, happy too. But Clara was delicate; it was towards the end of winter when they became engaged, and she had danced so much that she could hardly hold together.

Clara Meinhardt was the beauty of the family; the other three sisters also were pretty;

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but Clara — she was the beauty; even mamma said that.

Abraham Lovdahl was the best match at hand, although he was extremely young; but Mrs. Meinhardt thought it sweet for men to marry young; later on they became so blase and sophisticated.

Medicine, therefore, was not the profession for Abraham; that took altogether too much time. He had begun to study it; his intention had always been to choose the science in which his father had gained for himself a name — indeed, he even dreamed of continuing his father's work and devoting himself to the specialty of diseases of the eye. Professor Lovdahl had always thought it an understood thing that his son should be a doctor. But of what avail was all that, when Mrs. Meinhardt was opposed to it? At first, Abraham had struggled half in joke, afterwards in earnest, with the whole Meinhardt family; but when Clara dissolved in tears, said to him one day that with his obstinacy, she knew he wanted to bring about a breach, he gave in and surrendered completely. He could not endure that; and so he studied law. The Professor consented more



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willingly than was to be expected. But considering all things, he was not opposed to his son's receiving a juridical training, especially since he himself, in connection with the new factory, felt more drawn towards the practical life than to scientific pursuits.

To Abraham the change of profession became an introductory exercise in the art of bending his will and being happy at the same time. For Clara rewarded him and Mrs. Meinhardt forgave him. Moreover, the main thing was to live happily in the midst of agreeable surroundings. He had given up a cherished plan of life—it was a sacrifice, but he would be recompensed for it; he had not given up a principle; in that case he never should have given up—never!

At home, in the big house with his father, life had glided on so peacefully, just as Abraham liked to have it; strong emotions he could only remember during his mother's life time. He could well recall every feature of her face, and especially her strange, deep eyes; but together with these memories was blended the recollection of many painful moments when he, a little culprit, had stood before those unavoid-

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able eyes that always demanded the same of him: to be true and upright. And there was much in Abraham that responded to these expectations; but life had not furnished him with an opportunity to strike out in earnest for his honest convictions; and many vexatious small things had happened that made the recollection of his mother almost painful—his mother, whom he had loved so dearly and lost so early.

His young blood took up many thoughts and ideas that were not at all presentable in the Meinhardt salon, and were scarcely more so to Professor Lovdahl. His religious and political convictions underwent many and rapid changes; there was something in his nature that impelled him to criticise and oppose. But he was so unfortunately situated. Where should he go with all that was fermenting within him? Amongst those whose affection he valued—should he take a stand—would it not merely arouse useless discussions and lead to difficulties? Why forfeit what was dear to him and for no earthly good?

So he soon became one of the most extreme among his comrades, and his wild paradoxes

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flashed through tobacco smoke, while the friends sat together and drank one another up to eloquence and visions of the future.

Abraham passed his legal examination in a short time, impelled by a desire to possess his beloved, and urged on by Mrs. Meinhardt's cold, grey eyes. After a short sojourn at home — he was so impatient that he took no time for foreign travel — his marriage with Miss Clara Meinhardt was celebrated in Christiania. Nor did the newly-married pair take a wedding journey. Mrs. Meinhardt thought it would be much pleasanter to spend all the money in giving the whole family a summer in the country; the young people could board by themselves in a farmhouse close by. "Indeed, they would be just as free and secluded as in Switzerland," argued Mrs. Meinhardt.

Abraham went to the country, but was soon impatient to get home, that he might be rid of the whole Meinhardt family; and besides, he wished to show his little wife how prettily everything had been arranged for them in their own apartments. They were to live upstairs in Professor Lovdahl's capacious house.

On the summer evening when the young people

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came home, the high, old-fashioned rooms in the stately suite were filled with flowers, and were half obscure in the last rosy light of the setting sun. The second story of the big house was so high that one could see over the smaller houses to the beach below. The bay with its low banks and islets lay smooth as a mirror, and the land sloped seaward lower and lower, gradually losing itself in the horizon, which was, indeed, the open sea.

Abraham loved this coast, and his heart swelled when he led his wife to the open window of their dining room.

"Isn't it beautiful here, Clara?"

"Where? — what do you mean?"

 "The view — the sea — the light —"

"But, my dear! — there isn't a single tree here."

"Oh, you silly easterling!" he answered gaily, and swung her around towards the parlor, "isn't it pretty here? — well?"

"But it's almost dark —"

"I'll make a light."

"Oh, no! never mind — there's no hurry."

He hastily put a match to a lamp here and a candelabrum there, and at once there was a

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subdued light throughout the rooms. Then he drew her with him to show her the best of all: her own little boudoir.

"It must be lovely here in daytime," she said, as she felt the portieres. "Does the sun come in?"

"The whole day," answered Abraham, charmed.

"Dear me! then we must cover everything; we can't let our best furniture be ruined by the sun."

"Oh, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof; it can stand a little sun," said Abraham; "but if you will look here you will see the very best of all—my blessed mother's sewing table. It was brought home from Japan many years ago by one of my Grandfather Knorr's skippers.

"That's easy enough to be seen."

"What do you mean, Clara?"

"But, dear!—look at all that gold, and those horrid figures; it is not at all in good taste."

"By jove, Clara, you make a great mistake! See the hunter there on the top with a falcon in his hand, and the figures all inlaid in gold—it is a beautiful piece of workmanship, you

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must know, and in the opinion of a connoisseur it would be an ornament to any museum."

"Yes, but I don't care to have a museum."

"But you can understand, nevertheless."

"Yes, I can understand perfectly well that you are crazy over that old piece of furniture because it descends from your mother, whom you loved so well; you must admit, however, that such a thing is really not of any use nowadays."

Abraham did not answer, and he shut the table again.

"Now, do you know what is the best looking of all I have seen in the house?" asked Clara, as she arranged her hair before the glass.

"Probably yourself."

"Oh, how rude you are!" and forthwith there was a tight contraction of the mouth.

"No, no!" he exclaimed, laughing; "it just came out when I saw you in the glass; for you are truly the prettiest and the sweetest thing in the house"—and after many such words and some kisses she condescended to be reconciled, and continued:

"The handsomest I have seen so far is your father."

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"Yes, isn't he!" cried Abraham, delighted.  
"Isn't he a splendid man?"

"There is really something distinguished about him; he is a man who would attract attention even in the city."

"Indeed, I believe that," said Abraham, with a proud smile.

Then all at once she imagined that he was thinking of her little, shriveled father, and said:

"You are more like your mother, Abraham."

"I wonder if that is meant for a little dig?"

"A little dig! what on earth possessed you to think of that? — your mother, for whom you care so much!"

"Assuredly—but it sounded so strange after you had praised father so highly."

"Indeed, Abraham, you are rather irritating with your suspicions——"

"Suspicious, I!—but, my dear Clara, how can you assert——"

"Yes, you are; you are horribly suspicious; you always think the most innocent word——"

"Nonsense—don't let us make our entrance into the house with quarrels and misunderstandings; come, little Clara! to bed!" and he

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took her gaily around the waist and carried her half way into the bedroom, but she struggled and would not enter into the fun. Her heart softened, however, when she went into the dimly lighted dressing-room and into the bedroom. There were many things that the Misses Meinhardt's scantily furnished bedroom had never known; and there was an air of luxuriousness and taste in the whole arrangement here that completely overawed her. She kissed her husband and said: "I have always wanted such a bedroom."

Quite charmed, Abraham went to put out the lights and to see that the house was shut up and the windows closed. At last he went into his wife's little boudoir and stood beside the Japanese table. From his earliest childhood he had been accustomed to see visitors gathered around this masterpiece, and he had learned to regard it as one of the most beautiful and most remarkable things in the world. He knew every feature upon the variegated falcon, and the crooked eyes in the hunter's yellow face. As he stood there he murmured: "'That old furniture'—she said; but she didn't mean it, she didn't mean to hurt my feelings."



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### II

Christensen, the bank president, was about to finish his discourse. He exchanged a glance with Professor Lovdahl, as from his place of chairman he bowed towards his colleagues in the board of directors and lowered his voice to a confidential, familiar tone:

“But although there is at present no direct danger in all this for the future of the factory, we ought, however, to pay close attention to the details which are likely to result either in advantage or injury, and in every way seek to the best of our ability to promote the interest of our shareholders. And now, as the prices of several of our most important products show undeniably a tendency to fall, so should we, according to my opinion, direct all our attention to the curtailing of our working expenses. That can be done in one of two ways: either by giving up temporarily some branch of the business and dismissing some of the workmen, or by reducing as much as possible the salaries and general expenses.”

“I, for my part,” answered Professor Lovdahl, “should be very much disinclined to curtail in any way the business, both for the sake

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of our worthy workmen, and for the reason that I do not in the least share the misgivings of our chairman, Mr. Christensen. I am willing to admit, however, that the establishing of the factory was somewhat costly, and that several expenses which were necessary only at first still remain and a number of things of that kind. But I do not doubt for a moment that Fortuna, conducted with skill and economy, will prove to be — if not a gold mine, at least a good business for the shareholders, as it is already a blessing to the town.”

Now, it had been arranged that at this point Consul With should propose a considerable reduction in the yearly salary of Mordtmann, the manager; but before he began to speak the young man rose. He had been expressly summoned to this meeting of the directors.

“Gentlemen,” said Michael Mordtmann, easily and unaffectedly, “it pleases me in a certain way that to-day things have taken this turn, for it makes it easier for me to say something I have at heart. I myself have seen with anxiety that prices have gone down in foreign countries, and without permitting myself to be too much alarmed, I realize that now and in

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the near future every possible economy is of the greatest importance. I have, therefore, looked around, searched in every corner to see if there was anything in any place that was unnecessary—something that could be dispensed with—some position to be given up. And at last I have found something superfluous, something I believe the factory can well dispense with, and that is—gentlemen—that is myself.”

The directors opened their eyes, but he continued, genial and smiling:

“I think I may safely say that I was quite as necessary in the early work of the factory as I have now become superfluous, since everything has been set in motion, the workmen taught, the clerical staff instructed, and, above all, since the factory is under the management of the city’s most expert and competent business men. I have, therefore, thought for some time of proposing to withdraw from my position; in which case a good deal of the general business could be given over to the head clerk, Marcussen; and otherwise the control of the factory could be under the immediate management of the honorable board of directors. I have

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hesitated somewhat to say this; for, in the first place, it requires, indeed, some renunciation of self to acknowledge that one is superfluous, and, besides, I cannot deny — which is perfectly natural — that I reluctantly take leave of this factory, which has become so dear to me, and am parting from such agreeable co-workers as are my present associates.”

There was a pause after these words. Consul With exulted over the lucky turn of affairs and smiled across at Professor Lovdahl; but Christensen rubbed his big nose and concealed his eyes with his fingers, as he squinted suspiciously over at Mordtmann.

It was really Professor Lovdahl who had stirred up a conspiracy in the board of directors to remove Mordtmann if possible; and now, with the first intimation, and of his own free will, he was going to resign. There must be something under it all.

“I, as chairman of the board of directors, cannot agree — or, at all events, not without satisfactory explanation — that Mr. Mordtmann’s services as manager should be so suddenly dispensed with. In any case, some time should elapse — ”

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"Pardon me, Mr. Christensen! but I wish, upon personal grounds, to ask the honorable board to permit me to withdraw at Christmas."

"So soon as that?" The chairman became still more suspicious.

"We are naturally reluctant to let such a capable manager go; but as Mr. Mordtmann wishes it himself, then ——"

The Professor finished Consul With's sentence: "Then we are all called upon to show him every consideration, much as we may regret ——"

"But," asked Christensen, "have my colleagues thought about the increased responsibility of the work for us, in the sudden withdrawal of the manager? I, for my part, dare not in such a case remain president of the board of directors; it would be too much for me, I am not strong," and half concealed behind his big hand, which he held before his face, he observed attentively the others, certain that all would, as usual, assure him that he was indispensable.

But Professor Lovdahl forestalled the others, as he said very dryly:

"When the success of our factory depends

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upon it, I take it for granted that every one of us will exert himself to the utmost."

Christensen wavered. Until now he had been unquestionably first in the little ring of men composed of directors, managers, and representatives of every possible thing without exception in the town. The delight of his life was to hold meetings, direct conventions, draw up resolutions, and hear his own fat voice roll out well-formed, noble and elevated sentences. And, besides, he possessed an uncommonly fine scent in commercial affairs; his big, bulbous nose could ferret out worthless business from a great distance; and after snatching one more glance at Mordtmann, he said:

"I place no extreme estimate upon my importance as president of the board, but as the position will now become too difficult for me, I beg that the board may choose another at the next general meeting."

A dissatisfied, protesting murmur went around the table, but Christensen continued:

"Yes, yes, let it be so, gentlemen! My health is, as you know, not the best; and the city's increasing development imposes, in many ways, claims upon its—its more important

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citizens ; and for that position, I must candidly confess, I am not so competent —— ”

“ Ah, Mr. Christensen ! ” cried several, smiling.

“ No, no ! I am in earnest ; there is, plainly speaking, only one, after all, among us who understands all this chemistry, and that is Professor Lovdahl. Should he be willing to accept the position of manager, I do not doubt that at the annual meeting such an arrangement will be received with acclamation. ”

“ Gentlemen, you all know that my interests are more in the direction of scientific than of mercantile pursuits, ” began the Professor, “ and in the beginning I entered upon the management with the sole purpose of starting an enterprise which one might expect would bring prosperity and be a blessing to our town. But later it has come to pass that the factory has become more and more dear to me ; should it now be threatened with hard times, I will surely lay my old back to the burden. Yes, it is old, my friends ! I cannot, as Mr. Mordtmann, get from the factory to the town in three strides —— ”

“ Of course, the manager must have an assistant —— ”

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"Excuse me," said Michael Mordtmann. "I do not wish to be indiscreet, but, as we know, the Professor has a son who has recently, and with honors, passed his law examinations. Would not such a position be a good and agreeable one for a young aspirant to begin with? The juridical training will be. I am very sure, of great value in many instances in our business."

Professor Lovdahl was confused: it was the second time to-day that Mordtmann had seen through his most secret thoughts; it was exactly as he wished matters to turn out, but he had been preparing many small schemes to reach the goal. And now it had all been accomplished for him in a moment, and through the very man he had desired to remove.

Consequently it was quickly agreed, and almost without debate, that a proposition for these changes be laid before the annual meeting; that the position of manager in its earlier sense be abolished; and in place of it, the directors, with Professor Lovdahl as president, should assume immediate control of the factory. He, as president, was to be empowered to choose his own assistant, whose salary would be agreed upon at the general meeting.



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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When they went out into the street Consul With took the Professor's arm and congratulated him, laughing at the fortunate issue.

"But can you understand, Lovdahl, what possessed Mordtmann?—and we who thought he would fight for his position, tooth and nail! He must have seen that the feeling was too strong against him."

"Probably he did," answered the Professor absently; but when he had said good-bye to the Consul, he paused in the little market-place in front of his house and looked out toward the harbor, where the smoking chimneys of Fortuna stood outlined against the sky. People, as they passed by, bowed to the stately figure, as the Professor leaned upon his cane—a handsome dark brown stick with its carved ivory handle—a gift from his colleagues in the University. He bowed in return, without seeing, because he was thinking about this Mordtmann. Carsten Lovdahl had always hated this man, and for that reason he had given the closest attention to Fortuna and its management. He was always after Mordtmann—never in a way that betrayed personal dislike, but only as a conscientious director. He carried it so far, that

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at last a faction in the board declared itself opposed to the manager. One found him too expensive, another did not like him, and good-natured Consul With followed his friend, the Professor. And now, at one stroke—of his own accord—smiling, Mordtmann had given up the whole thing and gone his way. It was not thus the Professor wished to attain his object; Mordtmann should have been expelled, cast out, humiliated.

He was gone, however, and that was the main thing. The additional work and responsibility did not give Carsten Lovdahl much anxiety. This year he had really taken pleasure in the direction of the numerous and heterogeneous operations that had turned out so well and employed so many, and he was consumed with desire to see how entirely different and how much better it would be without that charlatan Mordtmann. What pleased him most was the thought that Abraham was to be made assistant. The young people should live upstairs; the house would be bright and gay, and the many bitter memories would creep into the corners and disappear.

But Christensen remained seated in his pri-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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vate office, where the meeting had been — still uncertain and suspicious. What would his wife say when she knew that he had given up his place of manager on the board, and for Professor Lovdahl, too, who properly did not belong to the “Ring.” For she wanted him to be first — absolutely the first in the town — and he had been that until now.

There would be an awful row, and still — still he did not regret. He trusted to his unfailing nose; there must be something in the wind. Mordtmann was not the man to give up such a position without a reason. He was a clever fellow, and his father, of the firm of Isaac Mordtmann & Co., in Bergen, was still more clever; they were not the kind of rats that desert the ship before there is danger ahead. So Christensen took courage and made up his mind to suffer what was in store for him; not even to shield himself would he express the least doubt concerning Fortuna to his wife; besides, he had too many good shares, and she entirely too many good friends.

Michael Mordtmann wrote the same evening to his father:

“It went smoother than any of us had

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thought. I suspected an occasional dissatisfaction on the part of the management—you can well understand where that came from—and before anyone knew a word about it, I was free of the whole thing. And I am very glad of it, although I am temporarily without a position. I think, however, you can find one for me. Concerning the factory, I fully agree with your remarks in your letter of the 18th inst.”

So it happened that Professor Lovdahl stepped into nearer relations with the commercial life of the city, which up to this time he had tried to shun. And Fortuna absorbed his interest more and more, after the work and the extensive business became clearer to him. He read foreign books and magazines, changed and improved and made great plans for new ways of business and expensive machinery. His medical practice was not large; by degrees he restricted himself to some good old houses, where he continued to go more as a friend of the family. On the other hand, he converted, little by little, his waiting-room and study into offices. Then came a treasurer, then a young man to run into town or to the factory, and

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agents and brokers began to drop in as into an ordinary tradesman's office.

One day an obtrusive corn agent, half in joke, sold a cargo of rye to Professor Lovdahl; the ship was lading at Danzig. The Professor was excited; it was an entirely new sensation. He was angry with himself, in fact; but rye was rising. He was vexed, nevertheless. What business had he among those shopkeepers whom he had always scorned? But rye continued to rise. And when at last he had three thousand crowns clear profit lying before him on his desk, Carsten Lovdahl felt an altogether new and peculiar thrill of pleasure. As a man he had always been rich, with his wife's large fortune, but he had retained from his youth and in his aristocratic blood an undisguised contempt for shopkeepers and a secret respect for money. He had used his wife's fortune with prudence and care, glad for the comforts the money brought, but without any direct realization of its power and many possibilities. This money upon the table in front of him, however, had something distinctive about it; he himself had produced it by the turn of a hand; he had power to produce more; for the first time he

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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realized the intoxicating feeling that in his hands lay something of the power which, as a human force, makes or mars mankind; and as he stroked the notes they tickled his fingers, and he actually thought that the wrinkled paper had an agreeable odor.

When Abraham came home he found his father rejuvenated and zealously engaged in different enterprises; but Fortuna was still considered the chief one.

Abraham took his place at the new desk, happy and full of courage.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### III

“Come in — come right in — Mr. Manager! — then you can see how it is with poor people; it will do you good; and, besides, it’s the fashion — what do you say? Nowadays employers know all about the workingman’s life and condition; and look at literature — what do you say? Only common people, poor people, working people — oh! my much respected gentleman, we’re overflowing with intelligence and sympathy! — surely it’s a nice world we live in — hey?” and he pointed around the little dingy room that was almost destitute of everything.

But over by the window there was a pile of reeds and shining white willows, and in the midst of them sat a young girl weaving baskets.

“Who have you with you, father?” she asked sharply.

“It’s young Lovdahl, the new manager — they say; — yes, she’s blind,” he added, snappishly; “not such an uncommon thing among poor people, common people, working people.”

The daughter smiled bitterly and turned her sightless, sea-blue eyes towards the light, while her slender, white fingers bent a reed. Abra-

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ham felt ill at ease, and when the old man went into the kitchen to get his afternoon coffee he said, slightly embarrassed:

“Have you always been — have you been so afflicted from your birth?”

The young girl turned around at the first sound of his voice, and casting down her eyes, listened attentively to the few words he said. As she sat there, and he was not obliged to look into her painfully vacant eyes, he was struck with her remarkable beauty. The bitter and discontented expression that marked her mouth and quivered in the slightly upturned nostrils disappeared now, and her pure white forehead and wavy brown hair rose with such pathetic innocence over her sightless eyes — over the wan, melancholy face.

“Say that once more,” she said to him.

“Don’t you hear, Grete? The fine gentleman does you the honor to ask if you were born blind. Yes, young sir, she was; worthless blood, poor blood, poor!”

The old man sat down with the coffee cup in one hand and a piece of bread in the other; coarse rye bread, with a thin spreading of cheap, salty butter.



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In his short experience with the factory Abraham, as a general rule, had found the workmen easy to approach and agreeable to associate with; but this old engineer did not please him in the least, and he regretted having allowed himself to be tempted into his hovel.

"Yes, black coffee, bread and butter that crunch between the teeth like bits of glass — that's not the kind of thing to offer, Mr. Manager — yet!"

"Yet?" — Abraham looked at him.

"Yes, yes! One never can tell till he's dead what he may be driven to eat — hey?"

He roared with laughter at his own wit, and the young girl laughed with him, but she soon stopped and bent over her work, while Abraham, who did not understand in the least these people, said good-night and went towards the door.

"When you come again you must look at Grete's baskets," the old man called after him.

"He'll never come again, father!" said his daughter in a low voice; but Abraham heard it, and there was something in the tone that touched him.

"I will come with pleasure to see your baskets the next time I am passing by. I shall

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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need baskets in my new house." He addressed these words to her in a friendly tone, and went out without further noticing the old man.

"Well, father! what kind of a fellow is he — the old engineer, Steffensen?" Abraham asked.

"Oh, he's a little ne'er do weel, who has tried everything under the sun and has never amounted to anything."

"He runs the engines, however ——"

"Yes, so far! Mordtmann is his patron; there is something of the charlatan in both of them; but Steffensen is a troublesome spirit who does not suit an orderly factory like ours."

"You are not thinking of discharging him?"

"Yes, as soon as possible."

"But he's poor ——"

"There are some people who believe he is rich."

"But his daughter is blind."

"Has he a daughter?"

"I thought you had examined her eyes; it seems to be an interesting case."

"Indeed," answered the Professor, dryly, and went on with his work.

Abraham resolved to examine Grete's eyes

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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more closely if he went there again. All the Professor's books had been removed upstairs, and Abraham spent many hours among them, especially on Sunday, while the others were at church.

It was a busy day, and the young people upstairs were to entertain some of their acquaintances at supper for the first time. The Professor had wished it, and it was his servants who prepared the supper, and, in fact, took charge of everything.

Nevertheless, the young wife was so tired that she thought she never would be able to finish dressing. Abraham went nervously in and out of the room; it was nearly time now; he waited and listened at the door; the maid came out — No — Mrs. Lovdahl was not ready.

"Heavens, Clara! can't you hurry a little for father's sake, if not for anything else?"

"Ah, dear! don't talk about your father! such a man as he would never overtax me so, if he knew; but, of course, he can't know; and when you don't care in the least ——"

"Well, then, we had better send and countermand the invitations."

"Oh, Abraham, how unbearable you are when you say things you don't mean."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“But if you are really so ill — ”

“If! — then perhaps you don’t believe me?”

“To be sure I do; but it’s too devilish hard to be obliged to have company under such circumstances.”

“Dear me, don’t swear so frightfully!”

But not less pretty and beaming did she appear as she came toward her father-in-law, and received with becoming blushes his good, old-fashioned compliments; while Abraham was obliged to admire the strength with which the weak Clara so effectually conquered her weariness when it was necessary. To tell the truth, however, he was angry at being obliged to feign belief in the weariness, the overwhelming weariness, that could disappear so suddenly. But these were crotchets Clara had inherited from her mother; he would take them out of her. Otherwise she was charming; everyone came and told him so.

The evening was a success. The old gentlemen played cards; there was music in the drawing-room, and the guests were in the best of spirits. It was the first entertainment in the new house, where there was so much to see and admire. But when the gaiety was at its height

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Abraham suddenly discovered some tight puckers around his wife's mouth, a living copy — these puckers were — of some he knew in Mrs. Meinhardt. All at once Clara became quiet; she looked straight past him into vacancy; when he addressed a word to her she did not hear him. There was a constraint even in the general conversation, a damper over the merriment; a cold wave, as it were, from the young hostess. It was really so strange; some of the guests exchanged glances; a few of the young wives understood it. Indeed, even Peter Kruse, who was a bachelor, muttered to himself: "By George, you have your hands full — good Abraham a Santa Clara."

Abraham struggled the whole evening with these puckers; he became feverishly gay, in order to keep up the general spirits, but no one could really take part under the icy cold smile of the hostess. He tried to get near her to whisper; she turned away to her nearest neighbor. He entreated her, with his eyes, to thaw out, to let go the odious comedy; if he had offended her — which he strongly suspected — they could talk it over afterwards, but only not here — not make a show of herself here before all these

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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strangers. He might just as well have made faces at the stove: she remained the whole time stiff, cold, polite or impolite, as the whim took her.

When Abraham at last, completely worn out by the difficulties of the evening, had followed the last guest to the door, he ran hastily through the rooms to his wife's dressing-room. She was standing waiting for him, but pretended to be unconcernedly arranging some flowers.

"Now, look here, Clara! what is it? Answer me," he cried, and stood in front of her.

"What is it? What do you mean?"

"Oh, you understand well enough: the way you have been doing the whole evening! Suddenly, before anyone knew a word about it, to seat yourself like a mummy: not a smile, not a response."

"If I wasn't able to hide my bad humor until the end of the evening — although, God knows, I tried with all my might — you, at any rate, know the reason, and there's no necessity to ask."

"I don't know the reason; I suspect, however, that you are displeased with me; but, before God, I don't know what I've done."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“You’ll swear to that, will you! Maybe you don’t remember that you sat behind the piano and stuck your nose straight up into that gad-about Lina With’s hair —— ”

“We didn’t sit behind the piano.”

“Really there was not much to be seen of either of you, but from the laughter one knew well enough what kind of things you were discussing. And when I went up to her, because I was mortified on your account, and said in a friendly and courteous way something about her gown —— ”

“Yes, you said you didn’t like green —— ”

“And she answered me most impertinently: ‘It’s blue, madam!’ and you!—what did you do?”

“Yes, I, too, no doubt, said that it was blue, for it was blue.”

“It was green—do you hear?—bottle, spinnach green!—but it makes no difference to me; you can’t possibly understand how absolutely indifferent I am as to whether that creature covers her bones with green or blue; but that characteristic of yours, that odious habit of agreeing with the other side even in the most trivial questions; you never help me —— ”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“Oh, but, Clara, dear! when the gown seemed to me to be blue——”

“Why do you believe it looked blue to you? Simply because that disgusting Lina With said so; then, as a matter of course, you agreed with her; but I—your own wife——”

“Do you really believe that Lina With can be dangerous——”

“It’s the same with everybody; you prefer everyone to me. I am lonely here among all these strangers; and you, who ought to stand by me, you leave me shabbily in the corner for — for — for ——” She sobbed so violently that her voice was lost, and she rushed from the room.

Abraham ran after her; but at the door of the bedroom he turned and lit a cigar. He wandered up and down in the suffocating reception-rooms; he thought of his marriage and of his wife, and of his life that had glided on in happiness and sunshine, without quarrels and contentions. Once or twice he stopped before the mirror and looked at himself, half in wonder. Was it really he who had lived through this? Was it he who had progressed no further; this life so out of joint, so meaningless — was it his?



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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It is true that Abraham had been rapidly plucked of the first, fresh youthfulness; and, later on, he had come across so many modern writings, that he soon began to comprehend that matters in and of the world did not stand exactly as students in Christiania were given to suppose. It was not the case that everything was approaching perfection except in America; that all the enigmas of science were solved, or, at all events, would be to-morrow or the day after, by the University of Christiania;—instead of truth being established, family life harmonious and well ordered, youth almost spared exertion because the older generation had accomplished everything, and so wonderfully well; instead of all this, with which his home, his school, and the University had filled him, his eyes had been suddenly opened to the fact that, on the contrary, he had been born in an age full of the most varied agitations, and in a community that had need of young and resolute blood.

Abraham had felt a mighty longing to take hold anywhere and everywhere, all was so utterly wrong. But there was always this difficulty: Where should he take hold? It must be

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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done in such a way that it would amount to something—a life's object; otherwise, it would be of no avail whatever; otherwise, he could never make those nearest and dearest to him understand what he meant by taking hold.

He had tried with Clara when they were engaged. He had confided to her all his wild ideas, and it amused her, after a fashion, to hear his violent outcries in opposition to everything she had been taught and believed. It was only when he became too crazy that she laughed at him and declared he couldn't be in earnest.

What Clara approved of most was the emancipation of woman. She listened attentively when he, with indignant, burning words, denounced man, who during centuries of brutality had stunted and wronged woman; and when he drew a picture of their future—of a pair with equal rights and taking council together—Clara clung to him and said: “Will you always treat me that way, Abraham?”

All the vows and protestations!—had he not broken them?

No, he did not think so; he was very certain he had tried honestly to make their life together peaceful and happy; but Clara was spoiled,

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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that could not be denied; he ought not to tolerate such a scene as that of this evening. Nor would he put up with it any longer; now she was expecting him—he knew it—ready for reconciliation when he should have humbled himself sufficiently. But Abraham swore he would not humble himself, and continued to walk up and down the rooms; and as he finished his cigar his thoughts turned to the old machinist, Steffensen, and the blind girl. They were a strange pair; he would ask George Kruse, who knew everyone, where they really came from.

In the meantime he decided also to oppose his father's plan of discharging Steffensen. It did not accord with his ideas that a capable man should be refused work.

If so, what would become of the poor blind girl? And her image stood out before him, moving him as if it had been a memory of his childhood; the pure, white brow that rose with such pathetic innocence over the sightless eyes, over the wan, melancholy face.

Abraham wandered far off in fantastic dreams of those eyes whose sight might perhaps be restored—of a look full of gratitude, such

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## *Professor Lordahl*

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as he was surely in need of: and it was late in the night when he went to bed.

Clara was asleep.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### IV

“The Lord preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and even for evermore.”

With these words the parson led his betrothed over his father's threshold. The solemn entrance embarrassed stout George Kruse, and he simply folded his hands and said, “Amen.” But his wife, who was as thin as he was fat, threw down her knitting and ran towards her new daughter-in-law.

“Welcome! welcome into our house, dear one! and God grant that you may be contented and happy with us. Welcome, too, dear Morten! I can hardly kiss you for your beard. You took us by surprise. Peter said the steamboat couldn't get here before six; didn't you meet him? Then he'll be here soon. But Frederikke! how can you let Morten go about with all that horrid beard? I should certainly forbid it, if I were in your place.”

“Mother must not say such things to Frederikke; the idea of setting herself up against her future husband is far from her thoughts, I am sure. Am I not right, Frederikke?”

“Yes, Morten.”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Oh!" said Madam Kruse, "I didn't mean it so seriously. Land sakes! a wife can go a great way without setting herself up in opposition to her husband."

"The Bible teaches us, as mother knows  
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"Yes, my son, I know," interrupted his mother, curtly; "but we mustn't begin with theology, but with a cup of coffee. Everything in its place. Sit down, Frederikke, and once more a hearty welcome, dear children!"

George Kruse wondered, as he always did when his wife talked, where the deuce she got all her words. He came out and murmured something, but retired immediately into the corner.

It was not, however, so much his new daughter-in-law who embarrassed him as his own son. At the time Morten chose the profession of theology, both his parents were pleased; it happened very well. The elder son, Peter, was a lawyer, and old George thought, that as now it was certain he could not have either of his sons where he especially wished them to be, namely, in the shop, it would, after all, be amusing enough to see his own Morten, with gaufered frills, standing in the pulpit.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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But was that really his little fat Morten who came here with such an uppish air and gave him a solemn, almost patronizing shake of the hand; big and bearded, and who looked so sternly at people through his light blue spectacles? The father felt thoroughly uncomfortable; and while active, little Madam Kruse soon had Frederikke chatting over her coffee, and, undaunted, treated Morten as she always had, old George walked about puzzled, seeking in vain for the tone he should adopt in the presence of his ceremonious son.

“Do you smoke, Morten?” he asked, timidly.

“Hardly ever,” answered Morten, impressively and with a sigh, as if to signify that that was one of his many renunciations.

Indeed, everyone thought that Morten Kruse had become very dignified after he turned his attention to theology. The surliness that had marked Morten Bagstraever\* at school had gradually changed into a sour earnestness, which almost of itself led him on to theology. He had been one of the lucky ones, and was already a curate with a church in town. Immediately after his appointment he became en-

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\*Ultra conservative.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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gaged, and it was his intention to be married at once, because his betrothed was an heiress without parents.

Frederikke Andersen was not really pretty; but Madam Kruse thought she must be exceedingly good and kind, she could look up so tenderly at Morten sometimes.

Soon after, the elder son of the house came in. He was out of breath, had come directly from the wharf, and made many apologies because he had not been present when the lovers arrived.

"It's that blessed club that takes all my time," he said. "I must have assistance;—you, brother Morten! you must join; our people, most of whom are in your congregation, live around the factory."

"You mean Fortuna. But what kind of a club is it you are talking about?"

"Oh, it's the workman's; first it was a kind of co-operative society; now it's a savings bank and sick benefit club, and everything imaginable."

"A club of workmen, then. Are you a member, Peter?"

"Member!" exclaimed Madam Kruse. "In-



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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deed, it's Peter's club; he founded it and set everything going."

"Indeed!" said Morten, dryly.

Madam Kruse's face flushed and she was about to say something, but thought better of it, and invited her daughter-in-law to follow her upstairs to her little bedroom. The father had slipped out again into the shop, so that the two brothers were left alone.

"I congratulate you, Morten, both on your appointment and your engagement; she looks so sweet and good."

"Frederikke is a serious and well-brought-up girl."

"Yes, yes!—she can be charming for all that!"

"Such light-minded words are not at all appropriate to my future wife, and I will say to you beforehand——"

"Fudge, Morten! don't make yourself ridiculous! That tone may do well enough with others, but you needn't imagine that I, who know you so well, am going to let myself be fooled by any such thing. Between us. Good heavens! the parson can safely be laid aside altogether. I assure you, that manner makes you simply ridiculous in my eyes."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“Truly, it distresses me, Peter, that you still seem to be ——”

But Peter was already out of the door, and Morten stood a moment looking after him. Then he sat down by the table, took out his note book, put down some numbers and added them up.

Lawyer Kruse had the reputation of being rather dull, nor had he accomplished very much in life. He earned what he needed and lived, besides, at home, because the old people wished it. The future did not promise anything brighter, for it went without saying that no public institution could entrust its law business to the little radical lawyer. The district could not give him criminal cases, and, as he neither drank nor was tricky, everyone agreed that he was stupid.

On the other hand, he had a certain knack of creeping into the confidence of the people; he stirred up the masses, as it was said. Although he was a cultivated University man, he associated with workmen and made them unite for the common interests—cheaper food and better houses. He was, therefore, hated by all the respectable people and abused in their newspapers.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Peter Kruse was so much older than his brother Morten, that he was a man when the other was a schoolboy, and for that reason it was even harder for him to tolerate the superior priestly tone, especially as, on the whole, he could not bear the profession; or — as the newspapers put it — infidelity and godlessness were in him inseparably connected with his political radicalism. In his home his mother had been his chief reliance, because George Kruse was entirely absorbed in his business. And as, at that time, Peter was the only one to take care of, she kept up with him to the best of her ability, and by degrees gained both knowledge and interest, of which she had in the beginning very little to boast. She had begun as housekeeper for George Kruse, who at that time was still a small, unpretentious provision dealer in tallow candles, brown sugar and syrup for poor people. And it was some time after she had borne him a son that she was elevated to the position of wife, and removed into the house when she could be dispensed with in the shop.

But the little irregularity was soon forgotten by people generally. Madam Kruse worked and toiled together with her husband, and when

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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at last they had climbed to the top of the steep road that leads from poverty to affluence, George Kruse said: "Thank you for the help, Amalie Cathrine! Now sit down in the parlor and rest yourself."

So came the prosperous days, and so came Morten into the world; that was why he was so fat.

Madam Kruse employed the good days in learning one thing and another; and though her learning always remained limited, she acquired such a respect for knowledge that she determined her sons should have the advantage of an education. She gained her point.

In regard to the eldest son, there was not much opposition from George. Peter was thin and pale and had a taste for study. But when Morten, at the age of twelve, was about to enter the Latin school, his father tried to take a stand. Morten was fat and surly and never played anything but shop; he never lost a farthing; and before it had been decided that he should study — for it was decided — George could not resist when Amalie Cathrine came with an argument in so many words — "he had stood in the shop with his father and traded in earnest."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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And how many times had George looked on with admiration at the perfect confidence with which the "little darling" took tobacco rolls, measured them according to the marks on the counter, and cut off a penny's worth with such accuracy that, if it did not fall short of the measure, it certainly never exceeded it. "Ah, yes!" sighed old George out in his little office, "now he is a priest, and that may be well enough, but it's out here the boy belongs."

Morten sat in the room and cast up the expenses of his and his beloved's journey, and when she came downstairs he said:

"Frederikke, your account stands so; you owe me ninety cents."

The new preacher made but little sensation in the town. There was nothing to find out about him; everyone knew the fat son of George Kruse; and when they saw him in the pulpit with his gauffered frill—authoritative and admonishing—it seemed to many, especially the older people, somewhat strange. But as he had passed his examination and was sent expressly to this congregation by Him who, according to God's ordinance, manages His Kingdom here upon earth in Stockholm, so

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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must they in all humility receive him as one who had authority, however strange it might seem to flesh and blood that this fat boy should suddenly rise up among them and take charge of their souls. And if there was not a crowd of people pouring in to hear him preach, as there generally is in the event of a new clergyman, he gained, on the other hand, the entire esteem and good will of his colleagues and superiors. For there was no nonsense about him; he would not give trouble with any new ideas — he possessed a fitting respect for the old.

The poor commissioner was especially charmed. New clergymen were generally a thorn in his flesh, because they would search out the poor, help a little here and a little there. Then came ladies running with warm soup, and there would be such a commotion among the poor that there was no such thing as controlling them. Nothing of that kind occurred, however, with Pastor Kruse. He sent the first who applied to him to the commissioner, as was meet and right to do, and not a single bowl of soup came through any fault of his.

When Morten was married, he rented a

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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modest little suite in the neighborhood of his father's house, and he and Frederikke very often ran across the street and ate dinner with the old people. His wife's fortune was invested in ship shares and things of that kind in her native town, Kragero; Morten would not carry on trade or invest money for himself. Madam Kruse had been exceedingly glad to have the young people so near—entirely too glad, she thought later on; one should not rejoice too much over anything; one is likely to be disappointed.

Was she disappointed? Far from it! Madam Kruse would have been ashamed of herself if she had ever mentioned such a thing; no—but it did seem very strange. Morten was a clergyman—earnest and austere; and Frederikke—certainly she was as sweet and prudent as the day was long, for those who liked her; but she was too old for Madam Kruse; young people should be young, she thought. Then there was one thing more: she must admit that the young people had very different ideas on the subject of economical housekeeping from those she and her husband had held even in their early experience, when they were in such straitened circumstances.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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To be sure, they had lived frugally, very frugally, but never in such a way as Morten and Frederikke, who knew to a farthing what they could save in soap and matches — no, she had not done that; George had never once required it. The young people had added up and calculated until they got everything cheaper, from eggs — of which they did not get many, however — down to scouring sand, and Madam Kruse always felt blank when Morten said:

“It is very well that mother has the means to pay such a high price, is it not, Frederikke?”

“Yes, you are right, Morten; but it makes it a little hard for us poor people that prices rise when others pay too much.”

And so with servants. Madam Kruse had not noticed, until Frederikke drew her attention to it, how incredibly maids can “gorge themselves” when they control the butter. In reality, Frederikke’s servants — she had only one at a time, and changed often — ate next to nothing.

It began to grieve good Madam Kruse that she should have lived to be an old woman without having learned economy and watchfulness; for she must, on the other hand, entirely agree with the young people, that there was nothing



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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so detestable as being wasteful and careless with God's gifts.

At dinner, on Sunday, Peter asked Morten if he had seen the factory. "There are many and great changes, you may believe, since you went to Christiania the last time."

"Yes, there are many changes and great improvements," added his father.

"I have passed by several times," said Morten. "Does it make money?"

"Like grass. Ask father. He has the dumps every year because he has only one share."

"Oh, one's enough," grumbled George. "One shouldn't be too grasping."

"If it is, as Peter says, making money, I do not see why you, father, nor anyone else, should hold back. It is a perfectly honest business, and, besides, is of benefit to the town."

"Do you want to buy shares, Morten?"

"I don't mix in trade," answered Morten, crossly.

A little while after he asked his father: "What do they stand at?"

"They are not quoted," Peter answered, "because there are hardly any shares in Fortuna sold. They expect every year a monstrous

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## *Professor Lowdahl*

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dividend, but so far it has only reached six per cent."

"Six and a half," corrected his father.

"Yes, but hardly anything was put aside for a reserve fund."

"Oh, a man like Professor Lowdahl is as good as a reserve fund."

"Does it not seem, Peter, that six per cent. is good interest? Do you see many places where one gets more?" Morten's tone with his brother was always a little warlike.

"The interest is good enough, but there's no guaranty for——"

"Guaranty!" interrupted the old man. "Why, there are both the Professor and President Christensen."

"Yes, Christensen, father, but he is in everything; it isn't very likely that there can be so much security in every direction. Who can be sure that there will be no decrease in products—that the factory may not lose—may not be obliged to call in the whole capital; and even then may not be able to clear itself? Who will go security for all that?"

"That is only talk, Peter. We all know that every human enterprise is exposed to the

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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changes of fortune, or, what I meant to say, Providence. But when judgment and prudence are to be found in the management, an undertaking like Fortuna—purely from a human standpoint—is very well secured. People generally have confidence in Professor Lovdahl, have they not?”

“Yes, he is a grand man,” exclaimed George Kruse, laying down his knife and fork. “He can make anything succeed, no matter what; and, besides, he’s enormously rich.”

“I would like to know, then, why the man borrows money,” Peter said.

“Does *he* borrow money?” asked both the others at once.

“Yes, I have had several clients who told me they had loaned Carsten Lovdahl money upon his receipt alone.”

“What kind of people were they?”

“Poor people, who had laid a little by for a rainy day.”

“Yes, I can understand that,” said George. “There are just such poor people who don’t own capital enough to live on, and Lovdahl is good-natured enough to take their little savings and put them into his business, as it is called,

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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and so he willingly pays them interest from six to seven per cent."

"I beg your pardon!" said Morten, starting suddenly. "Did you say from six to seven per cent.?"

"Yes, but how do I know," answered the old man. "It would be just like the Professor to practice charity that way. He has certainly an immense fortune himself, but he's one of those who like others to have money, too. He's not like certain other grandees in the town, who can't give a wretched little tuppence profit, because they want to have it all."

Then they began to talk about Christensen and the others belonging to the ring, and Peter made the old man laugh over the latest gossip of the town.

Morten ate thoughtfully, and muttered to himself, "Seven per cent."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### V

Abraham took from time to time many baskets from Grete Steffensen, and they became such good friends that no pretext for a visit was necessary. She attracted him, with her calm, quiet force, in a way which it never occurred to him to resist.

The father was really very interesting when one became accustomed to him, and Abraham recognized in the strange, sneering speeches Steffensen was in the habit of making, some of the modern opinions which were latent in himself. But it was especially when Abraham began to realize that there was something amiss with him, some mistake in his life, something hollow in the prosperity that had followed him always; or when his emotions took a still deeper form and he shrank before two inevitable eyes—it was then that he stole into the little house in the alley where the road turned around from the factory, sat down near Grete, took one of her small, thin hands and laid it upon his face, that she might pass her fingers over his features and tell him what he was thinking about.

She sat and chatted with him as she worked,

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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and there was no trace in her countenance of the bitter and disdainful expression that always appeared when her father spoke. She bent her head and listened to Abraham's voice, and a happy smile played around her delicate mouth so long as he remained. It had not taken Abraham long to gain her friendship. From the first time she heard his voice she showed him a confidence which would have been inconceivable in an ordinary girl. As she could not see, she was, therefore, never troubled by any shadow or change in his face, and could talk confidently and unconcernedly about things which otherwise are generally passed over with a look or slight shrug.

She was accustomed to hear things called by their right names; and intercourse with her cross-grained father had given her a childlike confidence that was never disturbed by an insolent look nor ambiguous smile. Abraham was the first man she had met who belonged to a more refined world than her own, and, therefore, she wanted to talk to him about innumerable things which ordinarily she was obliged to keep to herself. So their meetings became a strange mixture of childish talk and the utmost confidence.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"How can you endure to be so rich?" she said to him one day.

"What do you mean by endure?"

"If you can't understand that, you're stupid."

"Yes, I know I'm stupid."

"Only when you want to be, for you're terribly wise about other things."

"But what did you mean, really?"

"Have you never heard father tell about the poor—the very poor, not such as we are, but those who have nothing to eat?"

"It's my father who's rich. I'm not rich."

"Oh, you can't get out of it; you can get everything you want, and when he dies it will all be yours. What will you do then with all your money?"

"I'll give you all you want."

"Why will you give me so much?"

"Because—because——"

"Because you love me," she said, and laughed.

Abraham felt as if someone had struck him, and he hesitated for an answer. She spoke that rare and difficult word as lightly as if it had been one of the forcible expressions she was accustomed to use in conversation with her father.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Or if you don't love me, why do you come here and disturb me when I ought to be busy?" and she laughed again contentedly. "But you may believe I know it very well; and you don't like your wife any longer."

"But, Grete, what makes you so wise?"

"I've heard it."

"From whom?"

"From you."

"Now, Grete, that's not true! I've never mentioned a word——"

"No, not a word! It's not words I hear; it's sounds. I know everything you're thinking about when you've said: 'Good-morning, Grete!' I can hear in your footsteps outside if you are coming only to disturb me, or if—— if——"

"Or if?"

She dropped her work and reached out her arms towards him, and before he could prevent it, had he wished, she slid upon his knee and whispered in his ear:

"Or if you are despondent and weary and come because you are not happy, Abraham."

The sunshine was streaming into the room. It was autumn, late autumn. The rays of the



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setting sun had found their way through the low windows and filled the room with a warm, yellow glow. And as Abraham, strangely intoxicated and half ashamed, sat and tried to appear unconscious, for fear of frightening her, Grete laid her cheek against his and said she could feel the sun streaming down over her and that it was delightful.

All at once Abraham felt so inexpressibly sad that he almost cried as he sat there and held her in his arms. He had never known until now how utterly meaningless and perverted life was; but in that moment it all became clear to him — so clear and empty; it seemed that he himself was already old, and wandering through a long vista of dissolved illusions and shattered hopes; and what would life bring to the poor, unfortunate creature who was clinging to him?

She felt his mood instantly, as she always did.

“You are troubled to-day, Abraham, and do you know why?”

“Do you know, Grete?”

“You would rather have me for your wife than the one you have.”

“Well, upon my word, that would be better, perhaps!” he exclaimed, bitterly.

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"But it can't be," she added, earnestly, and went back to her place.

"Why not?"

"Because, in the first place, you have one; and, in the second, I can never marry."

"Who says so?"

"Father said so."

"Oh, if you found a man whom you knew well and liked——"

"No—it's not for the man's sake; it's for the children's. Father says when the little one would go to the stove and pour boiling coffee over itself, I couldn't see—ah, I can see it all so plainly!" She held her hands up before her blind eyes. "No, no, that can never be!"

It was evident that the picture had burned itself into her consciousness and shut out all thoughts upon that subject.

Abraham became quiet and thoughtful and played with her long braids of hair. She bent over her work and scarcely said anything; and so they were sitting when Steffensen came home from the factory at seven o'clock. Abraham could never find out whether the old man had any objections to his visits to Grete, but to-day it was very evident that Steffensen did not want

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to meet him. He went about the room whistling, and Grete whispered to Abraham: "Father's angry."

In the meantime Steffensen went into the kitchen, where he was accustomed to wash when he came home from his work; and as he doused himself in the water and snorted like a porpoise, he shouted in a loud voice:

"Teapot — hey? — a silver teapot with sugar bowl and cream jug! — from all of them — aha! aha!" — down he goes into the water — "from all the workmen in Fortuna; that will be exceedingly grand — eh?"

"Do you understand?" whispered Grete.

"Not a word," answered Abraham, and got up to go.

"For zeal: teapot; — for fidelity: sugar bowl; — for human treatment: cream jug! — how surprised the good man will be! — ha! ha! ha! — Excuse me, my young gentleman! — old Steffensen lets himself laugh at you all."

"What kind of a teapot are you talking about?" called out Abraham.

"Ah, now we must give ourself airs! How touching that you should trouble yourself to play a stupid little bit of comedy for a common

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man. I've played comedy, too, in my youth — that was, sure enough, in the town of Mandal, I'm sorry to say; but I played it better than you — Mr. Manager."

"Possibly, for I don't play comedy; I don't understand you — not one word."

Steffensen came quite forward in the door, drying himself with a towel. He had a red, shining face, with two big, prominent eyes, which he now directed towards Abraham, as if he were peering through an opera glass.

"And you want to make me believe ——"

"He knows nothing, father!"

"Bah! What do you know? But I — I have my two good eyes. Do you dare to look me steadily in the eyes and say that you don't know anything about the workmen's festival they are getting up in Fortuna?"

"I have not heard a word about it," answered Abraham.

"You may be sure he knows nothing," added Grete, earnestly.

"The deuce!" muttered Steffensen, incredulously; "perhaps you don't know either about the gift of honor: teapot, sugar bowl also, for human ——"

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“Stop!” cried Abraham, impatiently; “I don’t want to hear your nonsense. Good-bye, Grete!”

“Ah, Mr. Manager,” said Steffensen, rubbing his hands with satisfaction, “will not Mr. Manager be so kind as to stay a few minutes, just to hear? To-day Marcussen—the gay Lothario, as he is called—went around the whole factory, and announced that all the workmen had agreed to present Professor Lovdahl with a mark of their esteem—eh!—what do you say?—on the fourth of next October, the Professor’s birthday. Of course, it was entirely a “free will” affair; but he didn’t doubt that every worthy workman would seize the welcome opportunity—oh, you know the old lesson—it comes straight from President Christensen’s upper story.”

“Will you join in, Steffensen?” asked Abraham.

“No, no—good sir!—old Steffensen,” he answered; “‘nix—nei—padetout!’—and the others wanted badly to do the same; but we all saw Marcussen make a mark in his book, and that meant, ‘Steffensen’s days with Fortuna’s machinery are numbered.’”

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"Oh, nonsense! Steffensen. Do you believe father pays attention to such things? I am sure he would do everything to prevent the foolish collection if he knew of it."

"Ah, if you only knew, if you only knew," hummed the old man, as he sauntered back to the kitchen in order to finish what he had been doing.

"Why can't you join in with them, father?" Grete asked, a little anxiously; "it will amount to so little for each one."

"Why can't I join in, my child? Well, I'll tell you," and he took his stand in the doorway and straightened himself up as if he were speaking from a platform; "because it is humbuggery, sham, and the whole thing is a delusion of Satan. Do you believe that the people who work over there at the factory have at any time a farthing they have not a thousand uses for? And still they come with their freewill offerings — yes, free will — because they would rather go without butter for a few days than risk being without bread for a whole winter; and they come because they are so poor that they are compelled to be cowardly; old Steffensen is not so poor — that is the difference."

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Then, as if he had regretted the last sentence, he hurried on to say:

“Because you must know, my child, that here in this land it is looked upon as a favor to allow people to work and slave for wages that just about hold body and soul together, and scarcely clothe the body. If they are so fortunate as to work for a capitalist who doesn’t take their very life from them, nor turn them into the street for the slightest thing, then they come forward with contributions, with freewill offerings; the capitalist must have a silver set: teapot for zeal, sugar bowl for fidelity, and for human treatment, cream jug.”

He was interrupted by someone knocking at the door. It was Mrs. Gottwald, who stepped in to pay a visit. There was still so much light from the western sky, after the sun had gone down, that they could see one another distinctly in the room, and Abraham greeted her with a slight feeling of embarrassment; it was a long time since he had seen her.

Mrs. Gottwald in her fashionable establishment used a great deal of Grete’s basket work, and she came often to see her. Abraham had met her several times, but rather avoided her,

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partly because his conscience smote him for going to see her so seldom, and partly because he never liked to meet the town's people when he was with Grete.

But he did not escape this evening. Mrs. Gottwald asked him plainly to wait, so that they might walk home together. He offered her his arm, and they went a short distance, both a little ill at ease. At last she said:

"You never come to see me any more, Mr. Lovdahl."

"Dear Mrs. Gottwald, call me Abraham, as in the old days."

"I would gladly call you as in the old days, but you are such a stranger lately. I can no longer look upon you as little Marius's friend and idol, for that you were. Do you still remember him?"

"Yes, very distinctly," answered Abraham, "especially in a little, gray winter coat, with a strap on the back."

"Dear me, I have it yet; how good it is to talk with someone who knew him, and you are almost the only one now."

Abraham promised himself that he would go to see her oftener, and in the meantime they had



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reached the churchyard, where Mrs. Gottwald was going to visit little Marius's grave.

Once or twice it seemed to Abraham that she was going to say something, but had changed her mind. Now, as they were about to part and held each other by the hand, she turned her pretty, sad face to him, with an anxious expression in her clear, brown eyes.

"Don't be angry with me, Abraham! There is something I must say. Grete Steffensen ——"

He made an impatient movement and tried to draw back his hand.

"No, no! I didn't mean it that way, dear Abraham! I know you are not that kind; but it was only that I wanted to say something, because—because it always seems to me that I am interested in you for Marius's sake. Now, you must not be angry and think that I am meddling in what is not my business; my life has been such that it seems to me all defenseless women are under my charge. Good-night."

Abraham continued his walk over to the town, and as he went he thought of his mother; there was always something about Mrs. Gottwald that reminded him of her. He had often imagined that people would distrust him in his

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relations with Grete Steffensen, but it made him angry that Mrs. Gottwald should allude to it; and with these new thoughts he ceased to dwell so much upon what he had heard from Steffensen.

It was dark in the Professor's rooms; upstairs, however, in his own apartments, Abraham met his father, who was having a confidential talk with Clara.

"Good-evening, my dear boy! You have been out the whole afternoon, Clara says. Come now, and sit down; I will be your guest this evening."

The Professor's face beamed when he looked at the handsome young pair, and at all the luxury and good fortune he had provided for the dear ones.

"Yes, indeed, I, too, must ask where you have been all this time?" began Clara.

The Professor saw that Abraham was not in a good humor, and he had already learned to ward off little scenes between them.

"Don't let us ask him, Clara! The air is so full of secrets and surprises; you may be sure, Abraham has his, too."

"Is it true, then, what they say, that they are getting up a workmen's festival over in Fortuna?" asked Abraham.

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found, and Steffensen must go; that is clear and straightforward as the day."

Lately it had happened several times that Abraham's father did not think him as mature and capable in small things as he had shown himself to be; it had never happened, however, that he had set himself openly in opposition to his father; but now Abraham flew into a passion, the blood mounted to his head, and he said:

"It doesn't seem to me that I am treated very loyally. Here are arrangements and agreements made without a word being said to me; either I am manager and will be treated as such, or else I can go. I will not stay to be made a laughing stock."

"What on earth has come over you, Abraham?" exclaimed Clara.

"Make yourself easy, my little friend! Abraham has always been a trifle hot-headed; it lies in the blood. You will soon see, dear Abraham, upon calm reflection, that you are mistaken. You are given every consideration and attention as assistant manager; the fact that neither you nor I have heard of these meetings arose purely from delicacy."

"Very well, that may be; but I ask, is Steffen-

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sen to be dismissed when I particularly request that he shall remain?"

"Steffensen — that Steffensen! You don't know him, Abraham!"

Just then the servant came in and announced that a lady and gentleman were in the parlor and wished to know if they were at home. It proved to be Pastor Kruse and his wife. They made many excuses, both talking at once, for having intruded so late; but they had just come from the Bible class and had seen lights in the window, and could not resist the temptation to come in.

They were very kindly received, for, in reality, they came most opportunely. And, besides, Clara liked Mrs. Frederikke very much. It pleased her to entertain the clergy, and she usually spread herself upon these occasions, and at the same time listened with interest to the economical considerations and all the little pinchings and savings Frederikke taught her in the art of cooking. And the next day, when Abraham grumbled about a gravy which was nothing but a thick paste, she took great pleasure in telling him how very vulgar and horrid it was to waste meat and drink, even if one could afford it.

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The Professor and the parson soon fell into conversation, which began with the poor, went from that to manufacturers, and ended with the factory's most intimate affairs.

Abraham, alone, still felt out of sorts. He did not like pompous, conservative Morten — nor his wife, either; and it was very disagreeable that these people forced themselves lately more and more into the family circle. He continued to walk up and down the room after supper, and took no part in the conversation.

Otherwise, it was lively enough; for the parson had just as much to ask the Professor as Clara had to say to Frederikke; and when they separated, the ladies had made an engagement to meet on Monday, while the minister, slightly embarrassed, asked the Professor what time of day he could meet him on a matter of business.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### VI

A few days after, the clergyman, according to appointment, called upon Professor Lovdahl in his private office. He was somewhat nervous and restless, and was engaged in wiping the perspiration from his forehead with a pocket handkerchief that he had crumpled up in his closed hand. The Professor was placid and kind, but undeniably a little curious.

As he thought the purpose of the visit was to solicit contribution to charity, to a club, or to something of the kind, he tried to come to the embarrassed young man's assistance with general remarks on the many duties incumbent upon a conscientious pastor. Soon, however, he came to the conclusion that *that* was not it, and was on the point of asking, straight out, what he did want, when Morten at length brought forth very clumsily the question as to whether the Professor felt satisfied with his work as director of the factory.

"Oh, yes, so, so; there is always a great responsibility incurred when one acts as a kind of Providence on a small scale for so many people. We try, however, to the best of our ability, to better the condition of the workmen."

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That was not it, either; he did not want to talk about the workmen. Morten coughed and said, hesitatingly:

“I presume the shares are distributed among many?”

“The shares! Beg pardon! Well, yes! You ask about the shares—yes, they are well distributed; that is to say, there are not so very many. The price is high, 1,000 crowns for one share, and we have not undertaken to issue half shares nor less.”

The Professor gained his self-possession, which he had nearly lost, upon finding out that it was a question of business he was called upon to discuss. Nevertheless, he still felt uncertain.

When the Professor talked with people of his own class, he was always the man of science, ready to look down upon and joke about shopkeepers. Therefore, it seemed a little incongruous that two academicians should sit and discuss profits and shares. Morten Kruse, however, took it sensibly, when he finally came to the point. He expressed himself on business matters with a knowledge of the subject that astonished the Professor.

“At what price stand Fortuna shares at pres-

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ent?" asked the preacher, after they had chatted a little while.

"Well, to tell the truth, I do not know. The last I bought ——"

"You buy, too!"

"No, not that exactly," answered the Professor; "I have so many shares already; but it has happened several times that a shareholder has got angry at the general meeting, and so I have undertaken to buy the shares of the dissatisfied ones, rather than have annoyances."

"And how much did you pay for them?"

"So far as I can remember, I took the shares at the original value."

"Shares are still to be had at par?" asked the parson, eagerly.

"You would like to buy, then?"

"I will tell you, Professor," answered Morten, and tried to lay a little unction upon it, "my wife is not entirely destitute of what is called worldly goods."

"I have heard your wife is wealthy."

"Ah! it cannot be called a fortune; a modest sum to help in sickness or other visitations — that is all. Insignificant as it is, however, I



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would prefer to have it invested in the town, and as privately as possible."

"Of course," assented the Professor.

"It is not in any respect beneficial that a congregation should consider its pastor wealthy," added Morten, gravely.

The Professor, who at last understood the drift of it all, said kindly:

"If you wish either to buy stocks or in any way through me to invest your money——"

"Yes, exactly, that was just my wish," interrupted Morten, eagerly; "a man in my position cannot very well arrange such matters personally; nor, on the other hand, is it right to neglect altogether things temporal."

"Most certainly not—no! I understand you quite well, and it will give me pleasure if I——"

"Thanks—a thousand thanks!" exclaimed Morten, who had quite recovered his self-possession by this time. "When I, with God's assistance, shall have some money to spare, dare I hope to invest it with you?"

"I shall to the best of my ability assist you to invest your money in the most advantageous manner."

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"The most advantageous, perhaps, would be to let it remain in the Professor's business," said Morten, carefully scrutinizing the other.

"With me," repeated the Professor, slowly.

"I place it entirely in your hands," Morten hastened to say, as he got up to go; "you know yourself, Professor, the less the capital is, so much the more must one seek to increase it."

After he had gone the Professor thought a long time over the remarkable visit. It was quite true that some of the working people had placed their savings in his hands, and out of good nature he had given them a little share here and there in a good business, so that their money paid a better interest than it would have paid in a bank. But it had never crossed his mind to do so as a general rule. He did not need money—least of all high-priced money; and if the priest proposed to bring his here, with a hope of higher interest, it might turn out that he would be disappointed; but if he wished to buy shares in Fortuna, that was another thing; it was always encouraging to have purchasers at hand.

But Morten went away thinking how stupid

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he had been not to have asked, in plain words, what interest he might expect.

It would be hard to say who originated the idea of the workmen's festival at the factory. Marcussen had once said before Consul With that in the autumn the factory would complete its tenth year, and it suggested itself to the Consul that the somewhat premature jubilee might be strengthened if set aside until the Professor's birthday; and so had grown and developed many grand preparations, including the silver set.

Mrs. Bank President Christensen wept. Indeed, she wept most bitter tears. She had a crying fit every day over that silver. Just fancy! All that might have been hers: a teapot, sugar bowl and cream jug of massive silver! But it wasn't for that. She had, to be sure, a service of silver; her husband, however, needn't remind her of the fact; it didn't make the loss of the other one a whit easier to bear. At times, when she had been dwelling on the thought of the silver, it seemed to her as if Professor Lovdahl had stolen it out of her own cupboard; indeed, there was even a place in the cupboard where

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it ought to have stood, and Mrs. Christensen never went to look at her own silver without sighing: "There it stood."

"You are a booby, Christensen!" she repeated, sobbing, as the festival drew near. "You allow yourself to be at the head of all the needy, lying-in and sick clubs under the sun, but you give up—great heavens!—he gives up, of his own free will, the first position where he could have a little silver—yes, for that could be seen beforehand!—and so must our—yes, I say purposely, *our*—silver, go to that—that——" She could not find a word sufficiently abusive to apply to the Professor, so she just cried until she shook all over.

Christensen's marriage was one of the ordinary kind. Unfortunately, he was not so masterful in the bosom of his family as in the office; he was always vanquished in the encounters with his wife. He would get angry; then she would get angry; then they would quarrel and be at enmity. However, as they lived together, this could not go on forever, so they made up again, and were reconciled until there was another storm.

Christensen had this time to bear his wife's

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anger as best he could, and at the same time prepare the speech which he, in behalf of the workmen, was to deliver to Director Lovdahl. But as he sat and busied himself with big words and high-sounding phrases, he rubbed his soft nose and sniffed a little, as if his eulogistic effort had a suspicious odor.

All was going on swimmingly for the festival. A band of German musicians came to town, and when the day arrived nothing could have been more exquisite than the weather. The air perfectly still, fresh, but not cold; the sun, as it rose and set, shone through the autumnal haze with a warm, ruddy glow; and the smooth-washed headland or point, with its heather-streaked crevices, stretched out into the blue, rippling sea.

The factory's buildings were so ugly and sooty that they defied decoration; therefore, Marcussen gave them up altogether and collected everything to be found in the way of wreaths and flags for a grandstand which had been thrown together in great haste on the slope of the hill. From here the speaker could look down upon the factory and his voice be heard far off over the crowd below.

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Marcussen decorated the stand with flags and greens; he had some of the manager's maid-servants to help him, and was most gallant and attentive in assisting them to mount chairs and ladders and in lifting them down again. The girls laughed and tittered and gave little shrieks as they fell into his arms, and they could accomplish nothing without his assistance.

Marcussen was a big, handsome fellow, with restless eyes, and a knack with women for which he was celebrated. He had, in reality, a horrible reputation, and used to boast to his friends that he had his special page in the parish register. But, for the rest, he was the Professor's right hand in business, and, so far as the festival was concerned, he was, in fact, head and front of the whole thing.

In the meantime all was animation in the Lovdahl house. There was to be a men's dinner party in honor of the Professor's birthday, and the table in the dining room stood all decked for the occasion. The carriage stood before the door and the coachman sat in state and held the shining horses. The Professor walked up and down, as was his custom when dressing, and rehearsed his speech of thanks. The maid came with a

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message from her mistress, asking the Professor to be so kind as to come up for a moment — as soon as possible.

The Professor hurried off with his white necktie in his hand. He thought something had happened to the young wife. But Clara ran to meet him in the outer room, with flushed cheeks and her waist half hooked.

“Just think, father! He won’t go! Abraham won’t go to the festival, he says.”

“Well, well; nothing worse than that, my dear! You gave me a great scare. What’s the trouble? Abraham, why won’t you go with us?” asked the Professor, kindly, as his son came in from his own room.

“Oh, it’s nothing more than that I have no desire to go to this festival, and so Clara flares up——”

“Your father’s birthday festival!” interrupted the Professor, smiling.

“No, father, it’s not that; we will celebrate that here at home. The festival over there in the factory is a hollow arrangement, a mockery, to tell the truth.”

The Professor made a reassuring sign to Clara and said: “I have not the time nor do I

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wish to spoil my mood for the festival by disputing with you about that. No doubt, there is something in what you say, or, to put it more correctly, in what you mean. But you have, in common with the youth of the present day, an unfortunate desire to come dragging in a high ethical standard upon occasions quite out of season, where it is not in the least appropriate."

"But when my convictions——"

"When your convictions do not permit you to witness marks of respect paid to your father, you ought to remain at home, that is clear; but I hope your convictions will allow you to dine with me at four o'clock?"

"It is not right of you, father, to take it in that way. You know very well——"

"Certainly—I understand perfectly; you mean it all very well in your way, no doubt, and that you should choose this way is to be expected; it lies in the blood. I tried—which you may, perhaps, remember—several times in your early youth to warn you against the dissatisfaction and intolerance with which you resent that anybody or anything should rise above the common level. No, no! don't interrupt me; we shan't dispute, but that is the whole ex-



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planation. Ah, little Clara! won't you tie my necktie for me?"

With great difficulty Abraham refrained from replying angrily, and turning away, went into his room. His wife passed close by him as she returned to her room to finish dressing, and again a little later when she went out to get into the carriage. He recognized her perfume, and her gown almost touched him, but neither he nor she spoke a word. He sat and stared before him into vacancy until he heard the carriage roll away. There they were, sitting side by side, his stylish wife, all decked out and gay, and his father, wearing his large decorations, his cane between his knees and his hands folded over the ivory handle.

They suited each other perfectly. Abraham could not remember that his father and his wife had ever disagreed about anything. Instinctively, they seemed to hold the same opinions, which were almost always in direct opposition to those of Abraham. It seemed to him, as he stood there by the window, that in their views of life he and his father were separated as by a yawning abyss—by a distance greater than ever before between old and young. When he

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thought it over carefully, there was, indeed, not a thing they could see from the same point of view, not an opinion that did not bring about a rupture, estranging them more and more and ending in quarrels and bad humor.

He could not understand, when he gathered together all the insinuations, conversations and warm debates, how his wise and greatly admired father, whose head was so clear, whose mode of thinking was in the main so noble, how he could continue to be opposed—yes, almost hostile—to everything that he, Abraham, felt impelled to admire and to do battle for. And Clara—she, too!—to be sure, she had grown up with the queer old conservative ideas; but he had talked so often to her of the new, and she had grasped with zeal much that he had said. Now she denied that she at any time had approved his crazy and ungodly paradoxes.

Well! so much the stronger must he himself stand. The existing state of morals called aloud for personal truth and responsibility; he must be able to meet these demands. At that moment he thought of his mother; just so she would have liked him to be.

If he thought such a festival an imposition,

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he certainly should protest, and not even out of consideration for his father would he take part.

Abraham stood at the corner window a long time looking down the street. Hardly anyone was to be seen, because half the town had gone to the festival. As he stood and looked after the last straggler hurrying along, he began to think how fine the weather was and what a great pleasure it was for old and young to get out of town for a little walk and fresh air. Numbers of worthy tradesmen and workmen went past with their wives. They would understand but little of the speeches, and thought very little about the true significance of the festival; it was for them a kind of Sunday in the middle of the week, a half-holiday which they could profit by. And here he was, walking up and down in his fine rooms, grumbling at it all. Was there not something grimly ludicrous about this?

Suddenly it occurred to him that if he were really sincere in his opinions he ought either to oppose his father in earnest, or, still better, step forward in the midst of the feast and declare that such an arrangement as the present — where Capital forced the workingman to a degrading adulation — was not only an im-

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sition, but was something worse. If he did not dare to do that, he might, in truth, go to the festival just as well as the inoffensive citizens; nothing could be more wretched than this protesting in the parlor.

Then a mood came again which once before had fallen upon him like an extinguisher. Life was so perverted and meaningless; he himself was such a failure—a miserable fellow who never would be able to accomplish anything beyond petty, ridiculous attempts and disgraceful defeat.

Depressed and indifferent, he took his hat and wandered over to sit a little while with Grete, but he found the house locked. Probably Stefensen had taken her with him to the festival; it amused her to be among young people; they all knew her and everyone had a friendly word for her, and, besides, there was to be music.

Abraham walked on towards the factory. There was an interval between the speeches, and the band was playing "Die Wacht am Rhein." Upon reaching the hill, he stopped involuntarily before the strange scene. His daily walks in this direction had made him familiar with every spot in the neighborhood; to-day,

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however, it seemed as if strangers had taken everything from him and he was superfluous.

The big stand on the hill was full of gaily-dressed ladies; it glistened with champagne glasses, and servants ran about busily. Flags hung motionless over red berries, yellow leaves and the last lingering green from the gardens. The curious crowds from the town stood on both sides of the stand, and the workmen from Fortuna had assembled at a long table at the foot of the hill, where they regaled themselves with cigars and beer. Their wives and daughters stood around in groups, quiet and serious.

Abraham did not feel in a humor to meet his wife and the others. He made a circuit among the factory's buildings, and from there came out among the workmen and mingled with the crowd.

President Christensen had delivered the address for the double celebration, and Professor Lovdahl had responded. Thereupon a deputation had presented the silver set, and Lovdahl had thanked them with drinking "long life to the workmen." When Abraham arrived they had just finished drinking the toast, and the festival was nearly over.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Warm from hurraing and drinking beer in the sun, the workmen stood around now, enjoying themselves with their short pipes, or the more rare cigar, held way down in the mouth and smoking like small chimneys. They received Abraham respectfully and in a friendly manner, and it was soon noised abroad that the young manager would not drink champagne with the aristocrats, but that he did not think himself too good to drink beer with the people.

Without noticing particularly the impression he made, Abraham looked for Grete, and found her with the women. She was not in the least embarrassed, but blushed with pleasure when she heard his voice. The women and the girls moved away from them, but remained standing in a group in front, so that they could not be seen from the stand.

There was not one among them who thought any evil — not because they believed young Lovdahl to be any better than the fine city people generally; but Grete Steffensen was blind, and not as other girls. Misfortune shielded her from both envy and danger; she could do almost as she wished.

“Isn't your father here, Grete?”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Yes, he was here just now. Don't you see him?"

"No, unless he's away over on the speakers' stand. They are all gathered there."

"Yes, to be sure, he's there," she said, with a knowing smile.

The play of her features was so unmistakable that Abraham noticed it at once.

"What do you mean? What do you think your father is going to do?"

"He's going to make a speech," Grete whispered, triumphantly.

"Great heavens! He musn't do that," exclaimed Abraham, involuntarily. He thought of how difficult it was already for Steffensen to hold his position. Should he now make a disagreeable speech—it would naturally be disagreeable—he would render himself quite impossible.

But Steffensen was already up on the speakers' stand. With hat in hand, and arms akimbo, he made a succession of deferential bows towards the fine audience, while the young people from the town began to laugh and encourage him with jokes.

Abraham noticed that his father whispered

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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something to President Christensen, and the whole company on the stand moved as far away as possible from the speaker. This was done with a confused blending of forced politeness and dread of the well-known malicious person.

Steffensen, however, gave them very little time. He began immediately:

“Ladies and gentlemen: I am a workman of evil intentions, they say; one of the worst, some say. But don’t alarm yourselves, my much respected lords and ladies! I only wish to thank you here, thank you heartily and sincerely, as a deeply-moved workman in your Fortuna.”

In the meantime the much respected lords and ladies appeared to be busy shaking hands and taking leave of one another.

“I wish to thank you,” shouted Steffensen, “to thank you, because to-day, ladies and gentlemen! you allow the sun to shine gratis so beautifully over us poor people, because you don’t demand more of us than our savings for silverware; because you leave our wives and daughters tolerably in peace; I thank you, each and everyone in particular, because you so kindly permit us to live our lives in blessed labor for you.”



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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By this time none of the highly respected were left; the roomy stand was empty; only a few perplexed waiters were standing beside the champagne table. Even then Steffensen made a sweeping bow to the retreating party as it crossed over to the road where the carriages were waiting. Then, turning to the workmen, he said with a loud laugh:

“There goes the whole outfit! — eh! Now I must make my speech to you —”

“You can shut up,” came from a thick voice among the crowd of workmen.

“No, no! Let Steffensen talk,” came from another side. But there was a little grumbling, which increased until a calm, earnest man said:

“Steffensen shall not talk.”

It was one of the oldest foremen in the factory, and several voices cried out: “Steffensen shall not talk.” In the meantime the best of the workmen went over and joined Abraham.

Steffensen turned white. He restrained himself, however, and exclaimed:

“If it’s young Lovdahl you’re afraid of, you might just as well spare yourself the pains, for he is with us — one of us — isn’t that so, Mr. Manager?”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Abraham felt that all eyes were upon him, but he did not know what to say.

“Why don’t you answer?” said Grete, surprised. “You are certainly with us!”

Steffensen seized upon the occasion to come down from the stand with a tolerable show of dignity, and there was an expectant pause in the circle which was many rows deep around Abraham.

Suddenly the overgrown germ burst into life, pervading Abraham’s entire being. He was as one inspired and felt within himself a force, an exuberant courage, a consciousness of ability to exercise his will, to plunge into life’s contest and to act his part.

“Yes, I am indeed one of you,” he cried out to them, “and for that reason I stay down here among the workingmen, not up there with the aristocrats. We—we workingmen—we will hold together. Here is my hand!”

It was grasped by hundreds, squeezed and pressed. No one had ever seen Abraham look so before—tall, imposing, and radiant, he made his way through the crowd.

Steffensen again took advantage of the opportunity, and proposed that they should or-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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ganize a club, appoint a committee, and so forth. But as soon as he began to talk a coldness fell over the majority. They all knew he was a marked man; that his days in the factory were numbered, and there was danger of his dragging others down with him. So his proposal was ignored and drowned in a thundering hurrah for the manager. They wanted to drink his health, but there was nothing left. The servants had cleared the table, the feast was over, and the crowd had dispersed. Then the workmen in small detachments started for home, after having heartily pressed Abraham's hand.

Abraham went over to the town in a strange, exalted spirit of combativeness. Vague images and remembrances of what he had read in his youth rose up before him. He pictured for himself a future at the head of the workingmen's movement; he saw it grow to great dimensions; he had cast to the winds all thoughts of retreat, had cleansed and purified society of its gross injustices; and by the time he had reached the town he had gone so far as to see Clara and his father bow down to him and say: "You were right."

But Steffensen went home in a sullen and

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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angry mood. Grete was not any better pleased. She was angry on her father's account, and was not at all satisfied with Abraham.

"By heavens! such dastardly workmen as you are not to be found anywhere else in the world," Steffensen said to an old carpenter who had been one of those deputed to present the silver.

"We have so little strength to stand out with."

"Bah! If we would only stand together."

"Well, some of us hold together — with the management," said the carpenter.

"And what thanks do you get for all your miserable cringing?"

"That will be seen in the long run."

"Yes, so it will," snarled Steffensen. He understood the allusion.

The Professor's birthday was a gala day for the gentlemen of the town; and, especially after the death of his wife, the big dinner had assumed by degrees a distinctive character, with traditional speeches and droll ceremonies.

Abraham was still in his fighting mood, but there was no opportunity for an outbreak.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Clara was mild and amiable, as gentle as a lamb. In fact, she had had a talk with her father-in-law, in which they had agreed that Abraham was nervous and should be humored, that he might not grow worse. Nor at the table did anything occur to call forth an attack; all the world was so smiling and bland, and so heartily pleased.

As he saw them all getting fuddled, Abraham joined in and drank unconcernedly with them, and the pictures of society's hard fought battles were effaced, the laborer's advancing columns drowned in the merry jingle of glass and forks. He got up and went over to drink a private health with his father, as he was accustomed to do on this day. The Professor left his seat at once, and drew Abraham over to the window, where they could talk without being disturbed by the noisy table.

"I was certain you would come—my own dear Abraham," the Professor said, earnestly, and laid his left arm upon his son's shoulder.

Abraham was moved and began to stammer; but his father continued:

"No doubt there is a great deal of humbug with many things here in the world, but you

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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must not undervalue the importance of a good and friendly feeling between the workman and the employer. The closer they are bound together —— ”

“One does not bind himself closely to the workingman with champagne and silver sets,” answered Abraham, boldly. He was in earnest this time; he had an idea which he intended to set forth.

“What do you mean by that?” asked his father, as he withdrew his arm.

“I was down among the workmen to-day, father.”

“I saw you.”

“Yes, I declared myself wholly and entirely with them; and they all crowded around me.”

“You organized a club?” asked his father, coldly.

“No — no club — no particular club; but we united — you understand — such perfect, heart-felt harmony, such — loyal — you see —— ” Abraham began to hesitate; he colored up to the roots of his hair. Was it not, after all, a ridiculous thing he had done?

The Professor’s face brightened till it almost beamed.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“That was right! that was quite the correct thing for you to do, Abraham! just as it ought to be; no foolish association that binds the individual —— ”

“That was just what I meant,” interrupted Abraham, who had recovered all his courage.

—— “and may tend to raise up petty ambitions, as, for example” — the Professor laid his arm on Abraham’s shoulder again, and whispered in his ear — “as, for example, our worthy friend there, President Christensen.”

Abraham laughed, flattered that his father made merry with him over the city’s foremost man, who was sitting there in all his greatness, not more than ten feet from them.

“Do you know what he looks like from a back view, father? An elephant,” whispered Abraham.

“Yes, you are right,” laughed the Professor; “but it won’t do for us to stand here and ridicule our worthy guests. I must thank you, Abraham; you could not have brought me any dearer gift to-day, for I see in this unrestrained confidence between master and man a reflection of the good old days, and a hope for the future. Salute your people for me.”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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They separated with a shake of the hand and went over to their places at the table, where they were soon engulfed in the general merrymaking.

The whole evening Abraham was beside himself with happiness and hope for the future; and when it was time to go to bed, he ended in a frolic, and, picking up his wife, carried her up all the stairs to her room.

He had entered into life's problems, taken hold in earnest, cast himself into the conflict of the times, and half the victory was already in his hands. His father was with him — his great, his adored father.



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### VII

Carsten Lovdahl sat in his private office. Three high windows looked out over the garden — an old-fashioned, quiet city garden, with linden trees, whose dense foliage concealed the surrounding houses. In summer a subdued and cooling tinge of green pervaded the big room, and in winter the white snow glistened in the gnarled trunks and upon the untrodden lawn, where the cats of the neighborhood crept warily along in one another's footsteps and shook their paws.

The massive writing table of uncarved oak stood in the middle of the room. Letters and papers in carefully arranged piles covered both ends, and upon the green cloth directly in front of the chief stood a gorgeous inkstand of bronze — the Goddess of Fortune standing on a globe with a wreath of oak leaves in her hand. This was a gift from the fellow-directors in Fortuna; and by the side of it lay a white quill pen with flowers painted by Mrs. Clara's own hand. A row of solemn, heavy-looking chairs stood around, then a cabinet, a sofa, and again more chairs. The walls were hung with models of ships and maps and a few marine pictures,

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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together with drawings and photographs of Fortuna. The thick, dark green carpet, which was used both summer and winter, muffled the sound of footsteps and made the big room still more imposing. Heavy portieres separated the Professor's office from the outer ones, where brokers came and went. The highly-trusted Marcussen was the only one who passed unconcernedly behind the portieres, carrying messages to and from the master.

Not a trace of the doctor or man of science was to be found anywhere. Carsten Lovdahl had gone the full length; he was a merchant heart and soul. His business speculations interested and occupied him, and, besides, he was proud to stand at the head of the city's most important affairs.

It had so happened that the Professor generally stood first in all his undertakings. As oculist he very soon became distinguished, and he withdrew from the profession before his reputation had had time to wane. Subsequently he had felt somewhat isolated with his fine literary and scientific interests among so many mere money makers, and particularly in the social void that followed the death of his wife was he made to

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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realize more and more the necessity for some occupation which would fill his life. So he contracted a taste for money making and became entirely absorbed by it. With as much enthusiasm as if he had been young, Carsten Lovdahl placed himself at the head of many new undertakings which grew up, as it were, in his footsteps, sprang into life at his touch, and gave places and occupation for young and old, disseminating wealth and prosperity over a wide sphere.

His wife's large fortune consisted principally of foreign stocks and bonds, a part of which he deposited in banks in and out of the city, by which means he could draw checks conveniently without resorting to the necessity of indorsements to any great extent. As first director in the factory, he drew up all papers connected with the business, and these Fortuna drafts—as they were called in the office—were combined with the Professor's personal money transactions, so that Abraham formed a grand idea of the activity of the house upon his entrance as bookkeeper.

It was, however, not only through Carsten Lovdahl's office that notes streamed in in abun-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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dance. Money was easy, it was said, without anyone knowing exactly where it came from. What passed from man to man was not gold, but a mass of accumulating paper, which increased as a flood and bore upon its narrow quarterly strips the universal hope of a redemption, which, nevertheless, continued to be but a renewal.

Everything flourished in the town; everyone wished to take part, and there were resources for all plans. If anyone wished to go to Spitzbergen in search of caps, or to work copper mines in the far-away mountains of Dovrefjeld, build steamboats or mission houses, pump water or start a circus, he had only to go into Professor Lovdahl's large and imposing office, explain his project, and mention two or three names. Thereupon a joint company was formed, a credit opened, a new little note current born, which foamed onward, and, uniting itself with the main stream, disappeared in the agitated mass.

Mrs. Bank President had many sad hours. Her husband was being left behind, that was clear. Lovdahl here, Lovdahl there, and Christensen was but secondary — he who had always

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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been first. The bank president, however, seemed quite satisfied to be second; he offered no objections. The "Ring" settled all city matters, both great and small, with the most perfect unanimity, controlled all shares and corporations, filled all places, managed the banks, helped itself and its friends, kept out all those it wished to keep out, drank one another's health, and hurraed for itself on all festive occasions. The government functionaries were as ornaments in the setting of the "Ring"—highly esteemed and admired; but they strengthened also, in many ways, Capital, both in life and in death, from the receiver of customs, the judge, the judge of probate, even to the priest who would deliver the funeral sermon. Money, and money alone, was the pivot around which life turned, with reference to which everything was arranged—the sole right and title to open one's mouth with an independent expression.

. . . . .  
Carsten Lovdahl leaned back in his big arm-chair and looked around his office with satisfaction. He could now think, with a smile, of the time when he in the pride of his scientific knowl-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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edge had despised the mercantile classes. Now he had felt the sweetness of power over many men. His money, his widespread influence, and the servile homage he received were very different kind of food for his vanity from the cold scientific recognition that formerly had been his reward. And, besides, in a way, he was much less trammelled than before; he was not obliged to be careful and accurate; he was not likely to make mistakes; there was nowhere a close criticism lying in wait; everything that he did was *very* good, and brought him still greater adulation. He had soon learned that he could do anything he chose — indeed, that a certain regardlessness of lesser brother officials was one of the privileges of the “Ring.” Carsten Lovdahl, therefore, soon became prodigal of promises and wonderfully forgetful; condescending to those who bowed down to him, distant and superior when met with a masterful opposition.

Thus he sat one morning towards the close of winter. A spring storm from the southwest, with pouring rain, was blowing through the town, and now and then struck with terrible force the linden trees in the Professor’s garden, where the earth was black and slushy from

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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melted snow, and the cats, with tail in air, bounded with great leaps over the lawn to the railing, in order to reach the house.

The Professor was nervous—in fact, almost solemn. His son had just told him that Clara was ill. Dr. Bentzen, the family physician, had also been in the office to announce to the Professor that the young wife's confinement was imminent. Lovdahl worked absent-mindedly. He looked at the clock on the mantelpiece in front of the large mirror, or straightened himself a little in the chair and looked in the glass. He liked very much to sit in such a way that he could see himself.

Marcussen came in and announced Bank President Christensen.

The Professor was disagreeably surprised. What could Christensen want to-day? They had just—a short time ago, day before yesterday—been together in the directors' meeting. All was not going on quite as well over at the factory as they had expected. The spirit of the meeting had been a little peculiar. And now came Christensen, in such weather, too, and just in the midst of his anxiety for the result of the affair upstairs.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“Good-morning, Mr. Christensen. You out in all this storm?”

“I always sail before the wind, as the blessed Randulf used to say.”

He took a chair and drew quite up to the desk, as if he intended to stay for some time. He was jocular, which did not please the Professor, either.

“I came to talk with you about something concerning the factory, which I, for the present, at least, didn’t care to speak about at the directors’ meeting.”

“I had an idea it was that; Mr. Christensen is easily alarmed.”

“Quite true, too easily,” answered Christensen, good-naturedly; “but I am, so to speak, mixed up in notes and papers, and it is not by that road that one becomes what the Professor would probably call a courageous man.”

“According to my opinion, one cannot judge of a productive business, such as a factory, by one’s experience in a bank.”

“You are right in that, Professor; one cannot, indeed,” assented Christensen. He leaned back in his chair and stroked his face, grave and dignified, and with all the aplomb he pos-



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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sessed when he felt himself master of the situation.

The Professor noticed it and became quite as stiff and imposing in his large chair in front of the Goddess of Fortune, who, leaning slightly forward, held out to him her crown.

The moment's pause was filled by the storm which rushed madly down from the roofs of the houses, whistled through the bare branches, and sent the withered leaves, water and gravel rattling against the window panes.

"It's not very inviting weather for a journey," groaned Christensen.

"Are you going away?"

"I'm going to Carlsbad, as usual."

"But not for some time, however."

"Not so long, after all. This year I will go at the beginning of the season; it's less expensive, and I think that most of us, both great and small, will find it necessary in the future to retrench."

"I do not think so at all," exclaimed the Professor, excitedly. "My God! what more must these people in this damp corner of the world give up? There is no other diversion here than to drink themselves full. No music, no

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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theatre, no public amusements. No, no! Don't let us imagine that life is to become still more gloomy and sad. I will hope, rather, that the present prosperous condition of the town may lead to a brighter and easier existence for great and small."

"Yes, let us hope so, Professor. It does me good to hear you talk so confidently. God grant you may be right."

"But look around Christensen. See how one undertaking brings about another ——"

"They do not all succeed equally well."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, for example, that our factory in the current year will not have capital to carry on business."

"There is no ground for anxiety. We have many stocks in reserve, the selling of which ——"

"The selling of which will entail loss," interrupted Christensen, calmly. "Besides, you are the factory's first creditor, and however long suffering you may be, your money must be paid sooner or later."

"My confidence in Fortuna is without bounds," answered the Professor, with a wave of his hand.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"That's all very well; however, if the factory's debt to you had been paid there would not be much profit left over from last year."

The Professor made an impatient movement. It had cost him trouble enough, with the help of Marcussen, to make a favorable report of the past year's work in the factory; but he would have preferred to risk his own money rather than admit that Fortuna was not doing well under his management.

"I think it will be necessary at the next general meeting to demand a considerable payment on the stocks, and that will, without doubt, fall very heavily upon many. I, for my part, have not less than fifteen," sighed Christensen.

"Upon my word, it makes me laugh! So you think you have too many shares in Fortuna?"

"Perhaps you will buy five of them?"

"Buy? Well, all right! I will buy five shares."

"What will you give?"

"I will take them at the original price — at par."

"Well," said Christensen, "one thousand crowns a share. Would you like more?"

"You must have slept badly, Christensen," said the Professor, with a forced laugh.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"I never sleep well in the spring," answered the other dryly, as he arose. It seemed that he had gained the object of his visit.

At the door the Professor said jokingly:

"You may have your shares back at the same price next year, when we pay ten per cent. profit."

"Many thanks," answered Christensen, smiling, as he went through the outer office. From behind his hand he cast side glances all around, over the tops of desks and tables, sniffing lightly, as if to discover through his nose if the air had really the true, the genuine odor of gold.

But Professor Lovdahl sat again in his arm-chair and looked around the office, as if some change had taken place. Everything stood as before; the hand of the clock had advanced fifteen minutes, that was all, and yet it seemed to him that something had been taken away, or something had been added which had not been there before. This was the first shadow that had passed over his new life. Heretofore everything had gone well, everyone had admired in full confidence, and he had never for a moment doubted that when he — Carsten Lovdahl — should con-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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descend to be a merchant, he should, as a matter of course, surpass in every undertaking those uncultivated tradespeople among whom he lived. But at this moment his thoughts ran on involuntarily and quite beyond his control, going off into the wildest possibilities of loss, ruin and bankruptcy. He recalled to mind the great houses that had suddenly collapsed, fortunes shrinking into nothing, rich people empty-handed—a swarm of misfortunes, downfalls and humiliations rose up before him pointing prophetically.

With a great effort he cast these thoughts aside, wiped his forehead, and, going to the middle window, stood looking down into the desolate garden where the storm was raging. He did not hear that someone was knocking on the little door that led out into the hall, from which there was a winding staircase to the story above, and also an outlet to the back of the house. No one entered this way except humble, frightened suppliants and the most intimate friends of the family, and when the Professor noticed at last the creaking of the door, which was opened cautiously, he turned around quickly and suddenly remembered the situation upstairs.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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It was not, however, a summons from the young people. On the contrary, Morten Kruse's fat body appeared in the low door — dignified, but somewhat embarrassed.

“Excuse me, Professor. I take advantage of my acquaintance with the house, which dates back to boyhood days; I didn't like to go through the office. Dr. Bentzen told me, and so I thought a visit from the pastor might be of some consolation to the family. It is a moment — an event so joyous in its fulfillment that we will at least hope and pray — ”

“Thank you, Herr Pastor; it was very kind of you.”

“How is she getting along?”

“Everything indicates that there will be no trouble, but there is always — ”

“Of course; it is, indeed, a moment for prayer and supplication.”

The priest sat down in the chair the bank president had left, and puffed and panted. He was out of breath from having walked against the storm.

The Professor drew his face into the proper expression for a religious conversation. In fact, he did not like this preacher. There was a

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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duplicity, a something, about him; he never knew just how to take him. And Morten, on his part, seemed equally at a loss. The last time he had come it had been with the express purpose of talking about Fortuna shares. To-day, however, it was another matter; but the pause remained unbroken, and the Professor would have been just as well pleased to avoid a half religious conversation with the young theologian.

He crossed one leg over the other, looked from the Goddess of Fortune to the priest, and said in an offhand way:

“Are you still interested in our factory, Mr. Kruse?”

“Yes, Professor, I am. I am much interested in Fortuna.”

“It is, indeed, a blessing for many working people in the town.”

“Unquestionably — unquestionably ——”

“And the shareholders certainly cannot complain, either.”

“So I hear. The profit was good last year?”

“It will not be less next year.”

All at once a genuine spirit of trade took possession of the Professor; he began to praise

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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the factory and to give an account of the business, until the priest, more and more excited, became positively intoxicated by the large figures, and both seemed to have forgotten poor Clara, who was lying upstairs.

Finally, Morten said, as he made a movement towards his breast pocket:

“You promised not long ago that you would help me to invest some money if I should have any to spare——”

Just then Marcussen came in. Immediately both men at the desk thought it was a message from upstairs, and changed their expression; but it was only a package from Bank President Christensen.

The Professor opened it. It was the five shares, together with the legal transfers.

“He’s in a hurry,” muttered the Professor, angrily.

“The messenger is waiting,” said Marcussen.

“What is he waiting for?”

Marcussen whispered: “I think he mentioned cash.”

The Professor drew back. “And after banking hours? What nonsense! But wait, Mar-



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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cussen; let the messenger sit down for fifteen minutes."

Marcussen went out and the Professor threw the certificates down carelessly before him and leaned back to resume the conversation. The priest's eyes never left the pretty, ornamented papers upon which were engraved the Goddess of Fortune with a crown, a facsimile of the one standing on the table.

The Professor waited, and at last Morten said: "Are those certificates of stock in the factory?"

"They are just a few shares my friend Christensen has turned over to me."

"Is he selling?" asked Kruse, guardedly.

"Far from it! It was an old account, a liquidation—in fact, a kind of obligation."

"At what price did you take them?"

"To tell the truth, I don't remember just now. We'll ask Marcussen."

He was about to press the bell, but the priest stopped him. "That is not at all important. They stand considerably above par, don't they?"

"Yes, certainly," answered the Professor, and he bent quite down behind the desk, as if he

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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were picking up something from the floor. He felt the blood rushing to his cheeks; it was the first time he had tried his hand at such a business as this.

The priest had unfolded the certificates and smoothed them out with his fat hand.

"First rate paper," said he, smiling. "Was it not seven per cent. last year?"

"Yes, as well as I can remember. But I have an idea, Herr Pastor!" exclaimed the Professor gaily; "take them, they are just the papers for you; so if you want them, here they are—five of them."

"Do you want to sell, Professor?"

"I will keep my promise to be of assistance to you——"

"Thanks—many thanks! If they are not too expensive."

"Oh, we'll agree as to that," said the Professor. He looked all the time in a drawer he had half pulled out, and pretended to be searching for something.

But in reality the blood was throbbing in his veins. He hesitated, he wavered. It was the first time he had ever been a trader in a small way. He felt there was a merging of the boundaries

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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between right and wrong; between absolute honesty and shabby trickery.

But short as it had been — the attack of fright and evil forebodings which he had experienced after Christensen's visit — it had, nevertheless, left a stain and turned his thoughts into a channel they had never followed before.

If he intended to be a merchant at all, he must be one to the full extent; it would never do to play the sensitive philosopher when one had to cope with Christensen and his kind. It was just in this combination that the danger lay. He must, above all things, guard against it. And, besides, there was nothing to be said about the transaction. So far as he was concerned, he had not a doubt on the subject of Fortuna; and if he had a chance at one moment to buy an article and to sell it at the next for a greater price, that was only according to business principles — altogether fair play.

Therefore, he finally said in a calm, friendly tone:

“I will let you have these five shares for one thousand and fifty crowns per share; that is five per cent. above par value.”

“Do they stand no higher than that?”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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The Professor felt at this moment that he had been very stupid; he might have asked more, but he answered:

"I rather think that if Fortuna shares were to be put upon the market we should find they stood higher, but ——"

"A thousand thanks! I understand; it is very kind of you." Morten Kruse's face was almost smiling as he felt in his breast pocket and took out his pocketbook.

"That's what I like," exclaimed the Professor, "a cash transaction."

And while he with business-like deliberation signed each certificate and made the transfer, Morten with equal slowness counted out five thousand crowns in big notes, then the extra in smaller ones. It made five thousand two hundred and fifty crowns.

The Professor caught a glimpse of more in the pocketbook, and when he had laid the money under a paper weight, and handed over the certificates to Morten, he said:

"You have invested a portion of your wife's fortune in your father's business, have you not?"

"No, father says it doesn't suit in his business."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"I can well understand that," laughed the Professor; "George Kruse has certainly money enough."

"Do you think so?"

"Your father is, without doubt, very rich. He might have twice as much, however."

"How could he?"

"By investing his money in new undertakings, in connection with other enterprising business men, he could undoubtedly double his yearly income."

"Do you really believe so, Professor?"

Morten mumbled something further on the subject as he buttoned up his coat and took his leave.

But as they passed the little door that led to the winding stairs, a sharp, shrill cry ran through the house. Both men stopped and looked at one another abashed, and very much ashamed when they thought of the conversation that had begun so piously and ended in dollars and cents — especially the priest, who began to clear his throat and to stammer something unintelligible. The Professor, however, being the elder, recovered his ceremonious tone:

"As we have received no message from up-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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stairs, we will hope that all is going well; we must wait and hope——”

“Precisely! Just what I thought. One must hope—hope and pray,” said the priest, as he held out his hand; and it was a gratification to both as they looked into one another’s eyes to see that there was a mutual forgiveness of the little human weakness.

As soon as he was gone, the Professor laid the five thousand crowns in a large envelope, sealed it with his private seal, and pressed the bell.

“Marcussen, give Christensen’s messenger this letter.”

Then he took the two hundred and fifty crowns, counted them and put them carefully in his portmonnaie. He smiled; indeed, he laughed aloud when he thought of the cautious Christensen, who had sold his shares at par, and now he, in half an hour’s time, had pocketed two hundred and fifty crowns upon the same paper. Oh, yes; Carsten Lovdahl was indeed a match for them all when he put his mind to it.

Calmly and with an air of satisfaction he let his eyes wander around the room, beginning with the windows, where the rain was beating down into the desolated garden, and ending

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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with the Goddess of Fortune, who smiled upon him as she propitiously held out to him her crown.

Just then he heard quick steps on the winding stairs. He jumped up in fear and trembling. Abraham came rushing in, his face white from intensity of emotion, unconscious of the tears that were streaming down his cheeks, and threw himself into his father's arms.

"A son, father!—everything over and all right!—a splendid big boy!"

"I wish you joy, my boy! Joy and happiness for us all! God be praised."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### VIII

Spring came early, but gradually, and the mornings were still quite cold when Abraham went over to the factory. But the air was fresh and exhilarating, and it was a very happy time for him. During Clara's illness, which lasted for some time, he lived in his office, where his father's books were kept. He took his meals with the Professor or any place he chose, and enjoyed a bachelor freedom in which he found great pleasure.

Abraham saw his wife very seldom. She did not wish him to come into the room. A change had taken place in Clara. She had become very meditative, and preferred to lie quite still. She had suffered terribly. Her delicate, girlish body had been so illtreated that she thought she never could be all right again. And that was what she thought about as she lay there. When she remembered all she had gone through, a shiver ran down her back to the tips of her toes, and she would start suddenly from a troubled sleep and imagine that it had begun over again. Many times during the day she asked if she really was exactly as she had been before—exactly? She followed all directions with the



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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utmost patience, took every precaution, was obedience itself, and if the doctor or nurse happened to forget anything, she was sure to remember it. So far as her face was concerned, she was quite reassured, as she, tired out, laid aside the hand-glass ; her complexion had become even clearer.

For the first few days Clara did not notice the baby much, but the midwife said: "Just wait ; she is too young." And she could not endure the sight of the father. It seemed as if he reminded her of her sufferings. If he just barely showed his face between the bed-curtains, she made an impatient gesture and told him to go away, she felt so faint. And he would go off to the factory singing, after having gladdened his eyes with a peep at the little yellow, wrinkled lump lying in the cradle. Over there, among the people, he was very happy.

Marcussen had become indispensable in the office in town ; therefore, the daily superintendence of the business devolved upon Abraham. He much preferred this, as office business had always been irksome. But to go from workman to workman, talk a little with the people, ask about the wife and children, and, above all, to

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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act in a measure the doctor was just what Abraham liked. He was so glad when he could be of a little assistance in sickness or accident, but it must be done secretly, for Doctor Bentzen was the factory's physician. In the meantime, it was soon understood that young Lovdahl's ambition was to be as good a doctor as Bentzen, and before long the people considered him a better one. At this time, when the joy of being a father made him so light of heart and absorbed in a great measure his thoughts, he felt less desire to visit Grete; nor did she wish so much to see him after they had told her that Mrs. Lovdahl had a son. Abraham had never mentioned it, as he had a feeling that it would annoy her. He saw plainly, however, that she knew.

Grete was not as mature as other girls. The peculiarities and want of balance in her father's character had given her very indefinite and extreme ideas of life. But now she was grown she understood what had come to pass in Clara's life, and after that she was less pleased with Abraham's visits.

Grete Steffensen had learned from her father that life is a cruel injustice; that some few are

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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happy and millions suffer. When he gave vent to his feelings on that subject, she either burned with resentment or burst into bitter tears. But so far as she herself was concerned, she was well off. With all his blustering nature, Steffensen was in reality good and tender to her. Everyone was kind; they would pat her gently and say, "Poor Grete!" in a way that did her good. She could not see—it was true; there must be something wonderful in the light that comes in the morning and which she could feel upon her open eyes. But, thank God, she had so many other blessings.

Such had been her life up to this time; constant work and a light heart had sustained her. She was almost nineteen years old now, and was gaining strength and vigor. But everything seemed suddenly to be at a standstill for her. That child the strange lady had brought into the world, and the thought of which made Abraham's voice quiver with happiness, although he had never mentioned it—that had changed life for Grete Steffensen. What her father had told her—that she, being blind, could never have the care of a child—seemed to her now idle talk. Would she not know how to watch over this

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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child — his child? Ah, it should never leave her; she would hold it so fast, so fast! And she pressed the pillow to her warm breast during the sleepless nights, full of tears and half understood pity of her desolate, wasted youth, of the life that never would bring joy to anyone.

The disturbed condition in the house had also given Abraham an opportunity to visit among his bachelor friends. He spent his evenings generally with Peter Kruse. There was certainly a great difference between their ages, but Kruse was a genial fellow, whose age no one ever thought about.

"It's not true," exclaimed Abraham one day, "you are not really forty years old?"

"I'm really forty-five," answered Peter calmly, and stroked his thin hair.

"I never should have believed it; your mother is not so old."

"Oh, well, you know I came into the world rather early," answered Kruse, smiling, "and, besides, women are better preserved."

"Far from it; women age sooner."

"Yes, some; but take, for example, Mrs. Gottwald ——"

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“Mrs. Gottwald!” exclaimed Abraham; “she looks quite as old as you.”

“Oh, what perfect nonsense! childish nonsense!” Kruse jumped up suddenly. “Mrs. Gottwald looks as young as your wife.”

Abraham assumed a comic air, let the pipe fall from his mouth, stretched his eyes and cried:

“Fire in old houses?”

Thereupon good Peter Kruse became quite desperate, and scolded and swore some very big oaths.

Peter was now Mrs. Gottwald’s tenant and lived upstairs in the three small rooms. Why he had left home, where his mother would have been so delighted to have him, no one knew exactly; but Abraham had concluded from a single word that Morten had in some way been responsible for his leaving.

Peter Kruse did not care to talk about his brother Morten; moreover, he was occupied with the subject of his new landlady, and Abraham took occasion every moment to cry out: “Fire!”

“Oh, shut up!” said Kruse, disdainfully, “you are not at all amusing.”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Indeed, do you really think, in solemn earnest, that she is young, pretty, and rich—for she is rich, too, isn't she?"

"No, I don't think she's rich," said Kruse, good-naturedly; "but she has a bank account for some hundred crowns."

"How do you know?"

"I have seen the book."

"Bless my soul, it has gone so far as to talk of money."

"Yes, as you see; but do you know what she wants to do with the money?"

"Buy you a new wig, probably."

"No; but do be serious. Just think, she has a fixed idea that she will put up a fine monument to her son over in the churchyard;—you know she had a son—hm!—you remember the story?"

Yes, Abraham knew it very well. He felt a pang, as he always did, when he remembered the little steadfast Marius and a bouquet he had once received. All at once he became serious enough, and hardly heard Kruse, who continued to talk about Mrs. Gottwald's affairs, which evidently interested him in a high degree.

Abraham got up to go. It was still early in the evening. The sun stood low in the west and

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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shone from behind the last heavy clouds that were drifting over to the south after a day of rainy weather. He thought he would like to go over to see Grete; she looked so pale the last time he had seen her.

Peter Kruse went with him to get some fresh air, and as he sauntered over he said:

"I don't understand, Lovdahl, how you can tolerate that Steffensen."

"He's amusing; there are certainly many curious ideas in his head."

"A ranter, an old fool."

"To be a simple workman, I think ——"

"A workman, you say! Perhaps you delude yourself into the belief that a workman comes forth nowadays with such sham fiddle-faddle. No, indeed! Steffensen might have been good enough in his youth, ten or twenty years ago. There was use then for people of his type to wake up the working classes with big words and high-sounding phrases. But to-day they are wide-awake as well as advanced in quite a different manner, and, therefore, Steffensen is nothing but an old brawler among them, and you know very well yourself that he has not the slightest influence with the people."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"They don't understand him."

"To be sure they do; they see through him and laugh at him. Very different and more substantial qualities are necessary to gain the confidence of our working people and to give us any influence over them. They are a good deal more advanced, I can tell you, than most of us know."

"Listen, Kruse," said Abraham, and laughed. "Now we are all alone, and you know, on the whole, I am with you in most of your ideas and in those of the times, answer me candidly: Don't you think that you, in your hatred of the 'Pillars of Society,' are inclined to clothe your dear masses in rather too shining colors?"

"I believe nothing but what I see, and that is, that in this country the upper stratum has stood still for the last two or three generations; while, on the other hand, entirely new views of life have emanated from the thinkers and men of learning and penetrated to the depths of society below in a living stream of useful knowledge of life, such as life really is."

"Why below only?"

"Because the 'Pillars of Society' are frightened by the times. Their newspapers have filled



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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them so long with anarchy and mobocracy that one has only to come out with a modest proposition on the subject of political freedom, or the influence of the people, when immediately they think it a question of sharing their money or placing at the mercy of the populace their wives and daughters. In this manner, you can easily understand, they do not learn an earthly thing."

Abraham laughed.

"But your under strata. What do they learn?"

"In the first place, they don't read the newspapers of these 'Pillars of Society,' where the whole world is turned upside down and perverted to their own uses; dead thoughts dressed up in new and abusive terms; the true character of the times concealed, and the everlasting repetition of the time-worn, primitive assertion, that scoundrels live in America, communists in Paris, wisdom in Christiania, and virtue in Stockholm — they don't read that."

"Well, that's certainly something," said Abraham.

"Yes, my friend, that's not so little, after all! But they read what very few of us ever

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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think about—they read, and read, and read again the thousands of letters that come streaming in to us year after year from the Norwegians in America. You can see that's an educational source better than all the books and newspapers. Because, for the first time, the people learn from the people in their own language and in the same train of thought, which is the only way one can thoroughly understand. And think of the criticisms contained in these letters!—criticisms of our affairs from top to bottom—clear-headed, intelligent opinions and comparisons from a cousin or from father's brother, Uncle Lars, who was so trustworthy and so well acquainted with everything."

Abraham let him talk on, and answered with only a word or two. Kruse had a certain kind of eloquence when he got under way, and there was much in what he said that Abraham admired, but he could never fully agree with him and his opinions. He felt that he could not place much confidence in the little, radical lawyer, whom he had from his boyhood been accustomed to look down upon as a somewhat dangerous, and at the same time almost contemptible, person.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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When they stopped in front of Steffensen's house they arranged a meeting of the workman's club. After the festival, Abraham had risen greatly in the estimation of the club, and had been made vice-president.

As Kruse walked on and continued the conversation in his own mind, Abraham went into the little cottage, where he found Grete in her accustomed place, and in the midst of her work.

"You are so pale, Grete! Are you no better?"

"Yes, thank you, much better. Your medicine didn't taste good, but, I think, it makes me stronger."

"It's rather bitter, isn't it?"

"Oh, it's not so dreadful. Come, sit down."

"You're not all right, Grete!"

"Certainly I am; now do stop."

"Oh! I wish——"

"What do you wish?"

"If I should tell you all I wish, Grete, it would be a very long story."

"Well, wish and tell, and make it ever so long."

"First, I wish for a hand as skillful and sure as my father's was in his best days; then

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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I wish for courage and success — for success, above all things —— ”

“What then?”

“Indeed, I can’t tell you.”

“Well, those were the stupidest wishes I ever heard! I can’t help laughing; but go on! more stupid wishes!”

“I would wish to be on a steamer.”

“Yes, yes! Who would be with you?”

“There would be many — ever so many; all the workmen in Fortuna.”

“Who else?”

“You would be there.”

“Who else?”

“Your father.”

“Who else?”

“My father.”

“Who else?”

“Do you want still more, Grete?”

“Do you want any more, Abraham?”

“I don’t know.”

“Now you’re not telling the truth.”

“Well — just one more!”

“Only one?”

“Only one.”

“A very little one?”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“Yes, to be sure!—and so we would——”

“No one else now—well?”

“No, dear! So now we are on board. It isn’t such an immense ship, but we’d travel far away——”

“And all the others would fall into the river except us two—no, us three—shouldn’t they, Abraham?”

“Now, that you can do it so much better than I, it is best that you should wish.”

They continued to talk in this strain, but suddenly they heard a loud noise. It was Steffensen, who had come home. The door sprang open with a kick and in came a bundle of oily clothes, next a workman’s tool basket, and finally Steffensen himself, his face scarlet, his hands buried in his pockets, his eyes protruding, but silent—silent as a cannon before the explosion.

Grete let her work fall and took hold of Abraham’s arm.

“Father, you are discharged?”

“Yes,” roared the first explosion. “I am discharged before my time is up. Scorned! Steffen Steffensen, who was brought expressly from Christiania to manage this worthless machinery

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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that no one here understands—I am kicked out. But that isn't the worst of it. I understand the lot of an humble workman, and I know these bloodsuckers; nothing better was to be expected. But one thing burns into my very soul. Do you know why I am sent off, Grete?"

He stood still in front of them, and noticed for the first time in his excitement who Abraham was.

"Ah! so here we have one of these high and mighty gentlemen—ah, indeed! He can tell you; ask him, Grete!—then you can find out what is the matter with your father."

"I don't know anything about it, Steffensen, and I can't believe it possible," answered Abraham. He had become pale, and was very angry that the management, or that his father, at all events, had done this without consulting him.

"Well, if you don't know anything, I swear that both you and the others shall be made to know something. I am driven away without lawful notice, and without so much as giving themselves the trouble to find a pretext; but they told me straight out that it was for disrespectful behavior. Do you hear that? Bosh!" He turned copper color and his eyes nearly popped

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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out of his head. "Just think of it! To begin with, one has to submit to their owning everything in heaven above and on the earth beneath—even to this damned machinery that one runs and manages and cares for as if it was one's own flesh and blood; and so they demand into the bargain that one shall respect them! Respect who? Marcussen—the hog! Lovdahl —"

"Hush, father!"

"Listen, Steffensen," said Abraham, getting up. "I agree with you that it is unwarrantable conduct on the part of the directors, and I give you my word that they shall make you full reparation."

This confused Steffensen. Grete, however, exclaimed joyfully:

"Oh, father, come now! don't get excited. You hear that the manager will set it all right."

Steffensen felt inclined to burst out again, but he was somewhat overawed by the air of authority and confidence that had suddenly come over the young manager, and after Abraham went out the old man muttered:

"There may be something in the fellow, after all."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"You see, now!" cried Grete, triumphantly; "you, who always said he was just like the rest."

Steffensen looked at her and said: "What if you should be deceived, Grete?"

"Then I should certainly die," she answered, faintly.

Abraham went over to the town in double quick time. Now there should be a settlement. There should be a meeting of the directors. He was not afraid. He would talk plainly. It shouldn't be said of the factory so long as he was director, that capable men could be turned off because they had said some things at a festival that the aristocracy did not like. He would open the attack with his father. There had been quite enough of filial respect and deference; his rights as a grown man he would now demand. Remarkable as his father was in all respects, it was not to be denied that his life among these moneyed men had changed him a good deal. He certainly should say to his father, openly and candidly, and without anger—and, moreover, he would insist upon it—that Steffensen should keep his position and have full reparation.



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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As he walked along, he rehearsed his conversation with the Professor, and when he reached the town he was all prepared. It should begin so: "Father, I come to demand my rights as a grown man."

The Professor was not at home, and all at once Abraham had a misgiving that his father knew what was coming and wished to avoid the first heat of his son's anger. They had talked so often about Steffensen, and the Professor must know that it would provoke Abraham.

The girl said the Professor was upstairs. Abraham started to go up. Now it was getting worse; he would be obliged to have the settlement in his own apartments, where they would have to be so very quiet on account of the patient, and it would be more difficult to use sharp and harsh words in the solemn silence that surrounded the new-born infant. But there was no help for it. It should take place now; he would show them that he possessed both courage and will when it was necessary.

A strange hat and cane were lying in the outer room, but he did not think anything about that and went with determined steps into the sitting-room. His father came from the bed-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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room to meet him. The Professor raised up his hands and was about to say something, but Abraham began immediately, calmly but earnestly:

“Father, I come to demand my rights ——”

“Hush! hush! for God’s sake, my boy! Don’t talk so loud,” whispered the Professor, and drew him out again into the other room.

“I will be quiet, father, and talk softly, but now you *must* listen to me.”

“Yes, yes, dear Abraham! but at this moment ——”

“I cannot wait longer, father.”

“But Bentzen is in there alone.”

“The doctor?” Abraham suddenly remembered the strange hat. “What is he doing here?”

“I wanted to send for you, but I didn’t know where you were.”

“My God!” cried Abraham, “what’s the matter? Is Clara sick?”

“No, no! Clara takes it more calmly than one would expect.”

“What is it, then, father? Answer!”

“I thought the girl had told you. It began with his being so ——”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"He! Is it little Carsten? Father! father! it isn't convulsions?"

"No, my boy, it isn't convulsions; that is to say——"

"You're not certain about it! Oh, father! let me go in; let me see him."

"No, no! Be calm! I will go in. It may be nothing more than a little fever."

"Go in, father! Hurry and come back again and tell me. My God! if we should lose him!"

He stood by the window while his father was in the bedroom. He stood and looked down into the closed garden, where he had played in his childhood; the lawn was turning green and the buds in the linden trees were swelling. No memories, no thoughts occupied his mind except the one great fear which in his easily-aroused imagination grew from an evil presentiment to almost a certainty: He should lose him; it must be so. Nothing was more probable. The boy was weak and unusually small, and had come into the world with difficulty. Did not active and normal children die at his age in great numbers? No, there was no hope; he felt it so plainly.

The girl came from the kitchen to say that

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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the water was warm, and the Professor went out to prepare a bath. When he passed Abraham he said, consolingly: "It goes better." Abraham, however, did not believe it. Time passed and he could hear them out in the kitchen pouring water into the tub, but it was perfectly still in the room where little Carsten was; there was not the slightest hopeful sound.

Doctor Bentzen came in.

"Oh, doctor, tell me!" Abraham thought all was over.

"It's all right; he's getting on finely," answered the doctor; and at that moment the girl and the Professor coming in, carrying the baby's little bathtub, he added:

"I don't think we need the bath, Lovdahl. The pulse is now quite normal—a little weak, but otherwise the child is perfectly comfortable."

Both the doctors went in again, and Abraham remained standing before the smoking tub and listened. Still he could not muster courage enough to hope; the pulse was weak, the doctor had said.

After a long time they came out again. They stole out very quietly and held the doorknob.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Abraham turned towards them with a question in every feature of his disturbed, anxious face.

"He sleeps; all danger is over," whispered the Professor.

Abraham threw himself into his father's arms and broke out into sobs, so that they were obliged to take him farther away. When he had become somewhat composed, Doctor Bentzen, who was refreshing himself with a large glass of port wine, said:

"I will confide something in you, my dear Abraham. When we are made grandfathers we are apt to become very anxious, especially when it concerns a little grandson who bears our highly-respected name."

"Yes, you can be courageous enough afterwards," said the Professor.

"You might just as well have left me in peace and quiet in the club, Professor. The whole thing was nothing more than a little fever, and perhaps a touch of the gripes." Thereupon the doctor emptied his glass and said good-night.

They followed him down and stood a little while on the steps. It was late, the street was empty, and the evening mild and pleasant after

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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the rain, and they were all feeling more or less relieved after the excitement.

At last the Professor said:

“Well, good-night! Now I must go to bed. I am as tired as after a whole day’s practice in the old days.”

Bentzen went, and they shut the door. But as they stood in the dark, the Professor said:

“Sure enough, Abraham! now I remember, there was something you wanted to talk to me about.”

“You are tired now, father.”

“But it seems to me that it was something very important——”

“Yes, but I am, to tell the truth, tired, too. We will leave it till to-morrow morning. Good-night, father; and thank you for all you’ve done to-day.”

Steffensen! Steffensen! How immeasurably far he was from Abraham’s thoughts; and how in the world could he think of setting himself up against his father for the sake of such a matter—against such a father! He would, of course, attend to it and straighten it all out in the morning; it could be done coolly and calmly then.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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He went on tiptoes to the bedroom. Clara was asleep, white and pretty in the big bed. Little Carsten slept also, his diminutive nose emitting faint baby snores, and his wee, wrinkled fingers resembling the smallest and thinnest of shelled shrimps. Then Abraham, too, sought repose, and slept like a patriarch until broad daylight.

Before he was quite awake something unpleasant began to trouble him. It was Steffensen, but he shook him off and rang for the maid to ask how they were getting along in the other room.

"Thanks; both Mrs. Lovdahl and the little one had had a good night."

That was, indeed, the most important thing; the other could easily be settled. And having said good-morning to Clara, and having personally assured himself that the little one with the shrimps was safe and sound, he went down to breakfast.

At the table the Professor began at once. "I was thinking over, later last night, what it could be you wanted to talk to me about, and at last I guessed it must be Steffensen."

Abraham admitted it was, and then the Professor began, as they sat eating, to explain the matter.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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The directors had unanimously desired his dismissal. The man was not indispensable, nor was he so poor as he pretended. He had savings, it was said; besides, he was an extremely troublesome person, dissatisfied and ill-natured. Many complaints had come from the other workmen; one had even hinted—but that was only hearsay—that the oil in the machine house had disappeared.

Abraham defended Steffensen's case with warmth, but calmly and discreetly, and the Professor was willing to admit a good deal—especially that it was foolish to talk about disrespectful behavior; that must be something Marcussen was responsible for. But, on the other hand, Abraham must do his father the justice to say that he, at all events, could not have done otherwise. If Abraham wished to apply to the directors in the matter, he was perfectly free to do so, but the Professor, for many reasons, would not advise it.

Abraham would think about it, and so the matter rested.



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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and let it lie a long time upon her knee, while she looked straight ahead, lost in thought and seeing nothing. They were certainly the most peculiar young people imaginable. Had they no pleasures? Did anyone ever hear of their being glad about anything? Never a joke, never a burst of youthful laughter.

“Well, to be sure, Morten was a clergyman, but — good gracious! — indeed she had known a great many priests just as good as he who were not afraid of a little fun and cheerfulness. And Frederikke! Would anyone believe that she was a newly-married woman between twenty-four and twenty-five years of age?

Madam Kruse thought of her own youth. How they amused themselves at that time, how they laughed — laughed and worked; for they did work. Their pleasures were not expensive, they would not have ruined anyone. And the greatest of all was to be young; they had that gratis. For the rest, everything was plain and frugal; they knew well what it was to economize; — here Madam Kruse seized violently the stocking leg and began to knit away the thoughts that would come.

When their prosperity had begun to increase

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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almost to the point of riches, Madam Kruse had heard Dean Sparre, who was now bishop, preach one Sunday from the text: "Provide neither silver, nor gold, nor copper in your purses." It was midsummer, long before contribution day, and so the dean had made a vigorous attack upon the rich. And as if he intended to sum up the whole matter for the year, he collected and put into his sermon everything in the Bible on the subject of riches, from "he that hath two coats" "and the young man of great possessions" to "Lazarus and Dives" and "the camel and eye of a needle"—it was all there.

Those who associated with and knew the dean understood very well that the sermon was more for the consolation of the poor than for the discipline of the rich, but upon Madam Kruse's honest soul this sermon made an indelible impression. On the way home from church she talked with her husband. But George had not thought of himself in connection with the sermon, because he did not consider himself so rich yet. Then she explained to him that for a long time they had been prosperous enough to expose them to the temptations of riches, and, as

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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George was always vanquished in their debates, the result was he had to increase his expenses and be less miserly.

From that time Madam Kruse had kept strict watch over her own heart, and she also kept her eye on her husband as well as she could. But George had his impenetrable hiding place out in the dark old office, where the money had been made, penny for penny, with short measure and light weight, and things went on there very much as before. The most substantial mark of improvement in George Kruse was, that, when the year had been especially good, he measured out his Christmas gifts and church offerings a little more generously. But his wife, so far as she was concerned, had overcome the temptations of an avarice which had become almost second nature to her from having so laboriously assisted in heaping up their wealth. For at the same time that Madam Kruse had both heart and money to spare for the needs of those around her, she aired the house and its management of all the toil and labor of which it had been so full in the poor days, and George, who had always been fat, had now rounded out considerably in new clothes and clean collars,

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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and shone from the effect of good food and good treatment. He never ventured to murmur about expenses; indeed, he had no desire to do so, for he was so comfortable. And, besides, ever since the old times, he had such confidence in Amalie Cathrine that if she had gilded the front door he would merely have said:

“Well, mother, you must have some reason for it.”

However, she did not gild the front door, but she beautified and touched up little by little, year after year, until the bare, naked rooms assumed new life, with curtains and wallflowers, carpets and comfortable chairs; while the stiff, old-fashioned, wooden ones were banished to the dining-room or sent upstairs. The food, also, was changed. Formerly they had been accustomed to have dried meat placed upon the bare table, from which they had cut a piece, turn about, and eaten, holding it in their fingers. Madam Kruse had progressed so far now as to be ambitious in the matter of table linen. Her tablecloths and napkins vied with the silver forks and shining polished knives; her house had become what it should be: a plain, substantial, prosperous home.

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## *Professor Loudahl*

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Why should she now, in her old age, turn back to the troubles of her former straitened circumstances? Could our Lord really mean that every single penny should be increased ten-fold, and that one should everlastingly be on the anxious seat through fear of wasting the least crumb?

“Ah, far from it! He did not mean that at all,” said Madam Kruse in a half whisper, and she worked so furiously at the stocking leg that it assumed the disgraceful proportions of a long, thin sausage.

And yet, that was what they demanded of her—not right out, but in a hundred small hints—both Morten and Frederikke, especially Frederikke. In the beginning it did not trouble her much, but afterwards she could not help feeling that there was a little hidden sting in almost every word the young people said. She never answered, and for a long time she thought no one else noticed it, until Peter one day suddenly said:

“Mother, I have rented three small rooms upstairs in Mrs. Gottwald’s house.”

“My stars, Peter! Why do you want to leave home?”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“Don’t you think I’m old enough, mother?”

“Nonsense, Peter! Don’t you believe I can see you have another reason?”

“Well, yes, I certainly have, and if you insist upon knowing what it is, it is because I can’t stand Morten’s taunts any longer.”

“Oh, Peter, God help your tongue!—have you noticed it, too?” Madam Kruse glanced involuntarily around the room. “But you oughtn’t to let that annoy you; he doesn’t mean any harm by it.”

“Indeed, are you so sure about that mother? Every single Sunday he has talked about house rent, how high it is, and how well off people are who don’t have to pay it, and so Frederikke chimes in—she, his money box——”

“Hush, hush, Peter! You talk so dreadfully. Frederikke is a very nice woman, and you oughtn’t to mind what Morten does; he is a little peculiar; and you know it will distress me very much if you move.”

“Yes, indeed, I know that, mother; and for that reason I have put up with it as long as possible; but last Sunday, when you were out, he asked me what I thought you could get for my two rooms upstairs if at any time I should move.”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Madam Kruse's face flushed. "And Morten said that to you, Peter?"

"Yes. Do you suppose the preacher has scruples?"

"Well, he is a clergyman, you know," murmured the mother, doubtfully; and this thought disarmed her every time. She could do nothing more in the matter, and Peter moved. Madam Kruse took upon herself the arrangement of his new rooms. All his old furniture, and whatever he needed besides, were sent over to Mrs. Gottwald's house, and it was a great satisfaction to her to see how snug and comfortable everything was for him.

The next time Mrs. Frederikke came with her husband to dine with her mother-in-law she said, with her sour little smile:

"Well, there has been a division of property here, I understand."

This stung Madam Kruse, but she answered calmly: "What do you mean by that, Frederikke?"

"It was only that I saw all day long such quantities of furniture being carted away from here, day before yesterday."

"Dear! that was Peter's furniture, you know."



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Oh, that's it. I did not know that Peter was to have *all* the furniture; did you know that, Morten?"

"But, Frederikke, how can you talk so!" exclaimed Madam Kruse, trying to laugh. "It was, of course, only the furniture he has always had upstairs in his two rooms."

"Excuse me, mother; indeed, it was not that."

"But I assure you, Frederikke——"

"It is not at all necessary that you should give me an account; but the dark mahogany card table, that, at any rate, has stood there in the front room as long as I have been in the house."

"Yes—the card table!—yes, you are right about that, Frederikke," answered Madam Kruse, somewhat abashed. "There were, perhaps, some other small things besides, but that was because he had three rooms and they were a little bare, and so——"

"Yes, it does not make any difference to me what you give away, but you should not assert that Peter only took his old furniture. Right and truth should prevail; that is all I want."

Madam Kruse pressed her lips together; she

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would not say anything. She and the others knew that the young married people had received a good sum of money from George Kruse with which to buy furniture, and that the old trumpery Peter had taken with him was not worth one-fourth as much. Madam Kruse knew all this, and, moreover, she knew that if she remained silent Frederikke would become still more audacious the next time; but, nevertheless, she did not say a word.

And why? She did not wish to create a dissension. Besides, she was a little afraid of these two, who held so firmly together. And then — he was a clergyman. She was not aware herself that the true reason for giving up the battle was that she was really too refined to condescend to their level, and that they, seeing it, took advantage. Morten, however, was so clumsy that he could not launch forth as many adroit thrusts as Frederikke, but he served as a support, sitting there so fat and so entirely one with her. The only thing that he could think of himself was to pretend that his mother set him aside for Peter, and if there was anything that stung Madam Kruse to the heart it was just this. To make a distinction between her

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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children was one of the most atrocious things she could imagine. And the worst of it was that her conscience on this very point was not altogether free from alarm. But Peter had been born in the days of trials and hardships, and she—unmarried and uncertain—had had many thoughts before his birth as to how it would be for her in the future. Was it any wonder, then, that this weak, little child, who had followed her through shame and toil, should have filled her heart so entirely that there was, perhaps, not quite so much room for the fat, little fellow who came so long after. But it was wrong, great injustice, for anyone to say that she did not love Morten every bit as much when it came to the pinch; and it was still more unjust to say that she, in word or in deed, favored Peter at his brother's expense.

On the contrary, it came to pass that through fear of being led astray by some secret inclination, she overloaded Morten with favors, knit and spun, baked and corned, for his house, while she had scruples when she with secrecy gave Peter a pair of stockings. But whatever it might be, a pair of stockings or any other insignificant thing from the house—a stool, a little

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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looking-glass, or some such trifle which it had pleased her to send over to Peter's new abode — she could be perfectly certain that the very next time Frederikke should come into the door her eyes would light immediately upon the bare place, be it ever so small; and then would follow the little sour smile, and the sharp, pointed remarks which pierced into the most vulnerable fibres of Madam Kruse's old heart.

Little by little it came to pass that Madam Kruse actually was forced to wage a daily battle in order to maintain her house in the comfortable style she had introduced of late. Even old George's attention was attracted to it, and he became so courageous as to grumble a little because they had wine every Sunday. This was too much and made Amelia Cathrine very angry, and she settled him so effectually that he never lifted up his voice again. And it was worse with Frederikke.

One Sunday the young wife said:

"I really believe mother cooks half a cow in the soup every Sunday."

"Yes, but, then, it's so strong. I can feel it in the marrow of my spine the whole week. Give me another little spoonful, mother."

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It was Peter who usually came to his mother's rescue when a scene was brewing. But Frederikke was not to be thrown off the track. She gave a quick glance at her husband, who sat beside her, flabby and limber, but very dignified. Taking them altogether, there was the most surprising dissimilarity in the external appearance of this man and wife, who in every sentiment and opinion were so perfectly in accord, for while Morten grew stouter all the time, Frederikke since her marriage had become quite thin. The youthful expression that had rounded out her sharp features had now disappeared; she had become rather bird-like in appearance, with her round eyes and pinched, beak-like nose.

After having fortified herself with a glance at Morten, she said, in the charitable, forbearing tone that always made Peter furious:

"Oh, yes, when you think of one's having the means for it, and of never giving a thought to the many mouths that might be satisfied with all the meat that is boiled down here, in order to provide for us an unnaturally — yes, I call it an unnaturally — strong soup — is it not, Morten? and I consider it a downright sin to waste so."

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This ruffled and riled Madam Kruse. She knew very well, through the channels of the kitchen, what the poor were accustomed to get from the young wife of the preacher; she could not, however, bring herself to mention her own charities, and tell what she did with the boiled meat, so she said kindly, but with a little quiver in her voice:

“How do you prepare soup, little Frederikke? Teach me that.”

Frederikke was somewhat disconcerted.

“Indeed, it is not often that we can afford to have meat soup, but last week — or, perhaps, it was week before last that you had meat soup, Morten. Do you not remember? You thought it was so good.”

“It was quite as good as mother’s,” answered Morten, pompously.

“Indeed, I’m very glad,” said Mrs. Kruse, as she straightened her cap; “and what was there in the soup?”

“Well, of course, there was a good veal stock, and a spoonful of Liebig, and then brown thickening.”

But here Madam Kruse’s patience utterly collapsed. If there was anything that she, as

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a solid old housekeeper, hated and despised it was just such mixtures and sham dishes, and the bare sound of Liebig was enough to make her fly into a passion. She turned towards her daughter-in-law and said, with such warmth and energy that the frills on her cap trembled:

“I tell you what, Frederikke, I thank the good God, with all my heart, that I haven’t to eat such nasty stuff.”

Peter burst into a loud laugh. Old George, who never understood anything till long after, looked from one to the other, and Frederikke sat for a moment speechless, trying in vain to find words which in her anger failed to come. Nor did Morten—the booby—help her in the least, so she suddenly burst into loud weeping and rushed from the room.

Morten turned pale and said, sternly and reproachfully:

“Mother, I did not think that you could have the heart to treat poor Frederikke so.”

Indeed, it was very bad, too bad, but it had just slipped out of her mouth, said the mother. She had forgotten entirely how it had come about, and had only the consciousness of having been very horrid to her daughter-in-law. And the

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result was that she left the table to go in search of Frederikke, whom she found sobbing on the sofa in the sitting-room, and the old woman had to make apologies before she could pacify her and take her back to the table. This episode proved, however, an inexhaustible arsenal for Frederikke, from which she drew manifold darts to fling at her mother-in-law, and the remorse of the latter was so sincere that she accepted it all as just retribution.

The result of all this was that Madam Kruse became nervous and uncertain in her own house. She never undertook the least thing without thinking: What will Morten and Frederikke say to that? And many long hours she sat and mused over her stocking legs. But it was always a stumbling block, and set her needles in motion when the great question arose: How would it go with Morten—he who was supposed to be a servant of the Lord, and who now deliberately—she could not hide it from herself any longer—yes, deliberately, had given up to, or at all events was on the way to succumb to, the vice of avarice? How could this be reconciled? Ought she to entertain such a thought in her heart, that her child was a hardened hypocrite?



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No! that could not be. He must, through some diabolical art, be blind to the danger that threatened him. If he were only not so unapproachable, so encased in his armor of priestly dignity, she might have been able to help him. That sermon of Dean Sparre's was, indeed, engraved upon her heart. But he (Morten) was as a great iron ship, and she only the old woman in the boat—she could not draw up alongside and cry over to him that there were rocks ahead.

When we see an old woman, wrinkled and trim, seated in an armchair with her knitting, the room bright with wallflowers, and sunbeams streaming over the yellow carpet, we say, indeed she is well off—the old woman. Should she, however, shake her cap frills and say, “Yes, yes, youth can be light and gay; we old people have heavy burdens to bear,” then, perhaps, would irreverent youth think: “That old body, what has she to complain about, sitting there in a peaceful corner, having done with all life's struggles and disappointments, knitting untroubled, with only her memories until the light goes out?”

And yet so many thoughts are revolving in

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such an old head that it may be she bears a heavy burden of life's bitterness, as she sits there among the wallflowers, in the sunbeams, wrinkled and trim — an old woman who muses over a stocking leg.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### X

From land to land there rolls a stream of gold. Where universal traffic shifts the large amounts the stream flows out into a broad and mighty bed, and golden rivulets on every side in countless numbers find their way into the world's most distant corners. But on the surface of the current, with never-ceasing restlessness, whirls the blue white skum of commercial paper. It seethes and rustles, leaving a trail wide-spread over the whole earth. It increases with the impetus of its haste, dividing into new channels and leaping backward and forward with irrepressible force. But when the mighty stream subsides and the small gold rivulets hurry back from the world's remote corners, it is as if Mother Earth had taken back her gold unto her bosom, so suddenly does it disappear — first in the far-off channels, then nearer and nearer, until even the main arteries shrivel and congeal as ice. And just when such a glacial period approaches, the whirl of paper grows even wilder. It foams and rages, rising as a flood higher and higher to the houses which before stood high upon the dry land. One by one the long, thin strips of paper are pressed be-

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neath the portal — another, still another, until the barrier gives way and the unconfined torrent rushes in, sweeping over house and garden, fields and possessions, desolating great and small, scattering and dispersing to the winds man's industry and man's affections, leaving nothing but remorse and shame, humiliation and self-reproach, execrations and tears.

Not even Bank President Christensen had suspected that such a universal crisis was at hand, but his unfailing nose was beginning to scent that the genuine, unadulterated odor of gold was growing weaker and weaker in certain directions. For that reason he had a hard battle to wage, not alone with his wife, but with his colleagues in the management of the bank. Christensen's bank, as the people called it, had been established by the most prominent merchants in the town and was conscientiously used for the benefit of the "Ring;" but Christensen, the actual originator and founder, always held the balance of power in the management. And he was entitled to it, because in the early and difficult times he had given both time and industry to work the bank up. That was how he got the name of Bank President, though

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there had long been a paid functionary who conducted the daily business. However, it was said of Christensen that he could not live without poking his nose into his dear bank two or three times a day.

The battle he was now waging with the co-directors concerned the so-called Fortuna drafts. Christensen had determined to get them out of the bank; they should be paid gradually as they fell due, and not renewed. He did not express this openly; he was too conscientious a merchant to weaken the credit of an enterprise, or, at all events, as long as he had shares. But he managed to let fall so many little hints and insinuations, and apparently harmless proposals, that the others could catch his meaning to some extent without their being required to understand or assent, and so the meeting ended as usual, with Christensen being employed in rather indefinite words to act as he chose.

Merchants on a large scale who live in small places hate one another, because one cannot move without getting in the other's way; but Bank President Christensen had a special grudge against Carsten Lovdahl. It was not

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alone because Lovdahl had so surpassed him, but Christensen, who from his childhood had learned trade and worked himself up — he had first got rich through marriage — could not endure that this arrogant man of science should thrust himself into the merchant world and play the master. He had succeeded, through various schemes and by exerting all his influence, in keeping the Professor out of the management of his bank, to which position, otherwise, Lovdahl would have been entitled as a matter of course; and now, having almost got the assent of the others to clean out the Fortuna drafts, he turned at once to the managing director, who was as obedient as a dog, and gave him the necessary orders.

So Marcussen came one day to the Professor, half laughing and half embarrassed, with some drafts in his hand.

“Now I have some cheerful news for you, Professor! Rasmus comes back from Christensen’s bank with the information that Fortuna bills must be paid in cash.”

“Very well, Marcussen — then we’ll pay them. Christensen is positively ridiculous in his anxiety.”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Excuse me, Professor, it can hardly be a question of our paying all the Fortuna bills."

"Do they mean all?"

"Yes, Rasmus understood that it was meant from now on."

"How much does the factory owe Christensen's bank?"

"I don't know exactly; something between 150,000 and 200,000 crowns."

"Great heavens! Marcussen. And that must be paid in cash? Now, at once, in the next few days?"

The Professor's face flushed. He was so unaccustomed to surprises of that kind that he lost all self-control. The evil forebodings with which once before he had been tormented on account of Christensen took possession of him again. Did that man want to ruin him? Was it possible, after all, for anyone to ruin Carsten Lovdahl? Unheard of! Quite unprecedented! To refuse to renew the paper upon which *his* name stood! And his fear vented itself in a violent stream of angry words over the bank president.

Marcussen listened with amazement to the unusual outbreak. He agreed perfectly, how-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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ever, with everything. He felt that the honor of the house had been insulted, and he with it; and when the Professor had finished he proposed that they should coolly send Rasmus back to the bank again with the information that at present it was not convenient to pay these drafts. Then the Professor could have it out with Christensen the next time they met. The Professor, however, would do nothing of the kind. After his explosion of anger, dismay took possession of him, and he began to question Marcussen eagerly as to whether Fortuna had any money in the safe or any debts on account to be collected.

Marcussen stroked his fine mustache and made a wry face—about the same as when girls insisted upon having money.

“If the Professor is really going to put up with Christensen’s insolence, there is nothing to prevent the payment of the drafts.”

“Oh! You have money, then?”

“We haven’t it here just at the moment, but we can make use of our credit.”

“Credit, Marcussen! When the bank refuses the factory’s checks it is just because our credit is weak.”



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Excuse me, Professor; but here in this business we do not make use of our credit at all."

"It is the solid business, Marcussen."

"Entirely too solid — at any rate, for our circumstances. With Carsten Lovdahl's name on the paper, I shall raise a million in eight days."

The Professor leaned back in his chair. He knew that this was the truth. His name was remarkably good. The large fortune he had all at once poured in had given his business the reputation of being one of the most solid and ready moneyed on the whole coast, and Lovdahl took great pleasure in hearing this.

"The factory," said he, "has considerable debt."

"The best thing would be to let the factory go to the devil," said Marcussen, frankly.

"But, Marcussen! how can you ——"

"Excuse me, Professor; I simply meant that we go great lengths for the factory."

"Fortuna *shall* succeed; you shall see — both you and all the other wise heads. Don't let us talk any more about that. What did you mean by making use of our credit?"

Marcussen looked questioningly at his chief. He had received his mercantile training in

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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business that understood uncommonly well how to use credit to the full extent.

"We will go to the Bank of Norway and draw as much money as we want," he said, smiling.

"But the reimbursement—the value——"

Now, Marcussen thought that there had been quite enough of this innocence, and he began to explain in an offhand manner.

"We draw for the amount we need to-day—for example, upon O. T. Falch-Olsen in Christiania at six days sight, discount the drafts in the Bank of Norway, and send the same evening by post our note, payable at the end of three months."

"Hm—yes! we might, indeed, do that," answered the Professor. But the trouble was that he, who had so lately got into this business, could not wrestle as Marcussen did with drafts and notes. He was, therefore, always a little impressed, and willingly handed over such things to his trusted foreman.

Marcussen carried out his plan with the turn of a hand, and went himself to Christensen's bank, that he might have the pleasure of telling them some polite truths. The managing director

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writhed like a worm under Marcussen's sharp tongue; for, indeed, it was a shame, really, to reject paper with Carsten Lovdahl's name upon it. Christensen, however, who stood at the other end of the office and pretended to be going through some papers, took it all with great composure. And when Marcussen had gone, and the director ventured a modest remonstrance against the too great severity, Christensen merely took the money Marcussen had brought, and held it up under the director's nose.

"Look at these notes! Brand new notes from the Bank of Norway."

"Yes. What significance do you find in that?"

"Well, that signifies pounding out money upon one's credit," whispered Christensen, and went off to avoid being questioned.

The poor director was very much perplexed all morning. His faith in Bank President Christensen's nose was quite as firm and unshaken as was his belief in regard to Carsten Lovdahl's solidity, and the balance held him in painful anxiety. Nor did he mention to anyone the suspicions that Christensen had sown in his mind. And although Carsten Lovdahl's name shone

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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with increasing splendor and might, nevertheless was born in that moment a host of those invisible, intangible, deadly exhalations that float in the air, form themselves into a gentle murmur among the rushes, a whisper in a corner, a wafting of a rumor, mysterious insinuations, interrogations, universal tension, until gossip suddenly flashes and flames over a new name, laying it waste, tearing it, consuming it, grinding it to atoms and casting it forth again.

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But in Lovdahl's business there was more activity than ever. Marcussen was the man to make use of the credit, and the Professor, who had earned a great deal of money in grain this year, worked with heart and soul and found in Marcussen a co-worker who could both follow and develop his plans, and who, above all, never hesitated for means, nor came with tiresome objections.

Marcussen's long, blond mustache glistened, and inasmuch as his position of first man in the city's first office enabled him to enlarge the circle of his acquaintance, by degrees he extended his success above the level of servant girls and was soon a cavalier among the ladies.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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This did not improve his reputation, which remained horrible ; but, on the other hand, his manners and his unsurpassed audacity with women made him positively irresistible. Among men he was jolly and coarse, always abounding in the worst kind of stories, an excellent friend, ready for everything, to drink or to pay, which latter he did from a thick pocketbook where bank notes and "Leaves from the Book of Love" floated around promiscuously. To Abraham he was always deferential, and kept at a certain distance. This was not what Abraham liked, and he became doubly cordial and friendly towards Marcussen. And when it became more and more evident that Abraham was better fitted for the factory, Marcussen by degrees slid into the place which was intended originally for the chief's son.

Abraham, however, had plenty to do ; first of all, in his double position of acknowledged manager and secret physician of the factory, and also in the numerous and varied occupations that devolved upon him in his position of vice-president of the workingman's club. In the meantime it was a great pleasure to busy himself with such affairs as the Workingman's

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Saving Bank and Sick Club, and all such things, and it was also through his position of president that it had fallen to him to clear up Steffensen's affairs.

When he had thought over for some days what he should do in consequence of Steffensen's unjust dismissal, the whole thing became at last exceedingly distasteful to him. He would, perhaps, have drawn out of the affair altogether had not Grete's image returned to him continually as she sat among her willows and straw, waiting for him with the implicit confidence he could not dispense with. It pained him so that he could hardly prevail upon himself to pay his daily visit to the factory, because he had to pass her home, and he knew that the old man was sitting in the room, and that he told her every time he went by. At last he confided in his friend Peter Kruse and told him the whole thing. Peter understood. He sat in his accustomed crouching position, blinking through clouds of tobacco smoke, and with a slight motion of the hand shook the ashes from his cigar as he secretly measured the strong, handsome man who shrank from this little difficulty.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"I don't think you ought to make a fuss about it——"

"No, should I? What the deuce is the use of it in so unimportant a matter. If there was anything at stake, these gentlemen should be made to feel——"

"But I advise you to an outflanking movement," continued Kruse, dryly. "We will make Steffensen manager of the shop?"

"In the co-operative association?"

"Yes, it will be some kind of a living—not so bad if business keeps up as it has been doing."

"But do you think they will have him? You know, he is not much liked among the workmen."

"We will lay our influence in the scale, as Christensen would say. I can't endure Steffensen—you know that; but I believe him to be capable of running the shop, and I think you will be gratified by settling the matter in this way."

"Certainly! I shall be very glad——"

"And, moreover," interrupted Kruse, as he observed the other with a slight smile, "the good gentlemen of the management may learn

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a lesson from seeing the workmen help themselves; from knowing that the workmen find employment for the man they have turned out without grounds."

"Yes, yes! You are right in that, too! That is a bright idea, Kruse. Thanks, Kruse! Thank you ever so much."

And Abraham slapped the little man violently on the shoulder. He was delighted, full of enthusiasm and desire to go again and take hold at once.

When he had left, Peter stood lost in thought, and with the same bitter little smile. At last he said to himself: "Yes, that is the way they all get—they, who might be the bravest and best among us."

Abraham went more slowly as he approached Steffensen's house. He prepared the scene, laid the plan, and knew to a dot when he took hold of the doorknob what he was going to say, and what effect it would have upon both of them.

"Good-evening, Steffensen! Good-evening, Grete! It is a good while since we have seen one another," he began in a languid voice, as if he were a little tired.



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Yes, I can imagine the manager has been busy," growled Steffensen.

Grete said nothing, but listened in glad expectation.

"Indeed, I have been busy, both with my own and with other people's affairs."

Steffensen, who in the beginning had sat sullen and defiant, became now uneasy. These days of waiting had worn upon him. It was no joke, an old man with a blind daughter and without work. It was true, as has been said, that he had some money in the savings bank, but he had always intended to leave that to Grete. Should he begin now to draw upon it, there would be no other outlook for her when he was gone than the poorhouse. He had tried to keep up his courage, but in reality was awaiting his doom in fear and trembling.

"Well," he said, as gruffly as he could, "am I to be the engineer or not?"

"No, you are not to be the engineer," answered Abraham, calmly.

He felt how Grete, who sat beside him, started, and Steffensen sprang up and began to curse and swear in his usual way. Abraham kept very calm, and chuckled to think that the

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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scene had turned out exactly as he had imagined it. Now he thought it time to put the finishing stroke.

"Don't you remember, Steffensen, that I promised to see to the affair?"

"Yes, I do, and old Steffensen was fool enough to believe it."

"Well, you were not such a fool, after all," answered Abraham, laughing; "and having taken it upon myself to help, I thought it best to do it thoroughly. The work with the machinery is pretty hard and bad for the health, having to go in winter from the heat up out into the open shed—isn't that true?"

"It's dirty work; but, then, it's a living."

"Yes, it's a living—there are many kinds of livings; but when a man gets old, the thing is to find something suited to his strength and that will not kill him before his time."

Steffensen was uncertain again. He came a few steps nearer and looked hard at Abraham.

"And for that reason," continued Abraham, "I offer you the position of manager of the Co-Operative Association's shop."

Steffensen started. His first impulse was to fall down and return thanks for rescue from

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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poverty and suffering. But this passed like a flash. The long hatred of the capitalist, the inbred habit of discontent and obstinacy lay too deep in the blood. He just growled out something about having to be satisfied with anything, now that he had been turned out of his position. But, in fact, his agitation was so great that he went out into the kitchen and rummaged about among the pots and pans. It was well known that the woman who had been in charge of the association's shop had laid up money and was going to be married, notwithstanding she was a widow over fifty years of age.

As soon as the old man had gone, Abraham turned to Grete to enjoy his triumph, but he was disappointed with the expression of her face.

"Now, Grete, you are not satisfied with me!"

"Yes, I thank you very much. Father has been so anxious, but I knew you would help him and take his part, and you have — haven't you?"

"Yes, certainly, you might know that," answered Abraham, somewhat piqued.

Grete noticed it at once, and he hastened to add:

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“You can believe I let them understand  
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“What did you say? Tell me — what did you say to them? Was your father there?”

Evidently that interested her most. She had her father's blood, and nothing seemed to her so noble and grand as when one rose up against the high and mighty and fearlessly confronted them with the truth.

After the awakening to the full extent of her misfortune, Grete felt that her affection for Abraham was painful and humiliating, and her manner toward him was not so unconstrained as heretofore. Now, when she turned her face to him, so anxious, so full of love, so eager to admire him still more, he had not the strength to let go the only human heart whose faith and trust he possessed entirely, and, therefore, he deliberately set about to lie. Spurred on and brought out by her questions, he began to invent. They had so often made imaginary journeys together in which they had met with all kinds of fantastic adventures; this time it was a downright lie, although it much resembled their former fancies. He related the whole story, described the whole scene; that is, the

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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one he had intended to have, and which began: "I have come to demand my rights." Indeed, once started, he kept on, regardless of everything, depicting it to the end: how the directors had begged that Steffensen should be retained as engineer: he, however, had refused that: he — Abraham Lovdahl — would show the high and mighty gentlemen that the workmen could help themselves. He felt all the time that his face was in a flame, and he impressed upon her that she was not to speak of it — not even to Steffensen. Grete was beaming, and noticed nothing, and Abraham quieted his evil conscience and received her admiration. It was well she could not see him: it would have been impossible before a pair of eyes, before a pair of searching eyes!

"What's the matter, Abraham? Why do you jump away from me? Where are you? Come, sit down."

"No, Grete; I must go. It is late. Good-night! I'll come soon again."

Abraham returned from his triumph feeling very small and uncommonly weak in the knees. All his efforts were in vain, and what had happened was no trifling matter; it was lying, open,

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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barefaced lying. He had lied before, to be sure — just little, harmless fibs, but never in such a dastardly, deliberate way. And a pair of big, serious eyes seemed to take their place in Grete's blind face and fix themselves for a moment upon him. He could not free himself; they followed him, no matter how he turned and shrank. The recollection of his mother haunted him; painfully and reluctantly he thought of her; he was forced to think.

. . . . .

As time passed and he began to understand matters, Pastor Kruse also had much business to attend to. His ministerial duties consisted of the Sunday sermon when his turn came, and some Bible classes, which he conducted so that the lay preachers might have no chance or pretensions whatever. But the rest of the time, to tell the truth, was taken up with very worldly matters, and he became a frequent guest in Lovdahl's office — always through the back door.

Marcussen's new principle of using credit made it desirable that the Professor's business should have several solid indorsements. Heretofore, Consul With's name had been sufficient,

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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but now it would be well to have several, and Marcussen proposed George Kruse. Professor Lovdahl explained then to the preacher how perfectly foolish it was to let money remain out at the miserable little interest of four per cent. in such times, and the consequence was that very soon a cautious business relation was entered into between George F. Kruse and Carsten Lovdahl.

Old George could not help admiring his son's capacity, even if he did not agree with him always in his methods. But he really could not resist Morten, for whenever there was the least manifestation of a disagreement, the latter would instantly become the priest, and old George would give up. And so it happened that a good deal of Kruse's carefully concealed money came to light, to be placed in Professor Lovdahl's business, as Morten called it. And the interest amounted to a pretty sum the first half year. Even old George had to admit that.

Little by little it became the custom among the people to deposit their savings with Carsten Lovdahl. The higher interest he gave made Marcussen's elegant balance book much more to be preferred than that of the savings bank.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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When old George had got a taste for these receipts without trouble and with hardly any risk, he gave up his mean, shabby caution and became almost as eager as his son to engage in the Lovdahlian business, from which there dropped so much gold.

The first time Morten Kruse brought his wife the interest of the money which from time to time had been invested with Carsten Lovdahl, Mrs. Frederikke laid her thin arm on her husband's neck and whispered:

"That must be nearly seven per cent., Morten!"

"I do not know, I have not counted it," answered Morten, with dignity, "but a rich blessing seems to follow that man."

"But this money — shall we not put it in the bank? That would be safer."

"Just as you choose, Frederikke!" And the money was put in the bank.

But eight days after, his wife said:

"Do you know, Morten, what we have lost this week?"

"Have we lost anything?"

"By putting the interest money, you know, in



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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the bank, instead of with Lovdahl, we have lost over three crowns in one week. I have counted it up."

"Is it possible!" answered Morten, much dismayed; and a pause followed.

The priest sat and read his father's newspapers—they were always brought first to the young people—and Mrs. Frederikke was engaged in making herself a hat out of one of Morten's black cravats which he did not use any longer, as he habitually wore a cheap white necktie.

"Listen, Morten!" she said at last. "Do you not think it wrong to waste money so? Think of those three crowns! Think of what we could have bought with them."

"Or have given away, Frederikke."

"Yes, indeed! Think of the many poor persons we could have fed with the money, which will do no one any good now. I really think you ought to go to the Professor—yes, for you are very sure about him, are you not?" And as if the bare question appalled her, she fixed her sharp, bird-like eyes upon Morten.

Morten answered her with a superior shrug of the shoulders.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“Do you wish, then, that I should place the money with Lovdahl?” he asked.

“Yes, you may do as you please; but it seems to me, really—well, you know I don’t understand anything about it, but something tells me that it is a downright wrong—a sin—to let anything go to waste.”

. . . . .

The next day, when the electric bell had summoned Marcussen into the chief’s office, the Professor called out gaily:

“You were right, Marcussen. The priest has been here with the money.”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### XI

The nurse was right when she declared repeatedly in the days following little Carsten's birth that the mother was too young to appreciate at once the full extent of the blessing; that, however, would be sure to come. For when Clara had assured herself that her beauty had not suffered in the least, she turned her attention to the little fellow with such a jealous and ardent affection that she felt almost antagonistic to all those around her who set forth any claim whatever to the child. She flew into a passion with the nurses and the servants because they did not know how to manage him. So long as all went smoothly, it was Clara who saw to his welfare, according to instructions in a book, or in a long letter from her mother. But when the colic came, or any other slight ailment, then it was always the nurse or the maid, or someone else, who had done something wrong or been stupid. The child was a part of her own beauty, of her own perfection. Therefore, he should grow up to be a manly counterpart of herself. Some day he would make his appearance in the city even, and be acknowledged by the family, the friends, and the cast

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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aside, superseded ballroom dandies, throughout the entire capital up to the very castle itself — as Clara Meinhardt's masterpiece.

"You seem to consider little Carsten your exclusive property," Abraham said, good-naturedly, when she would not let him go near the child.

"Yes, to be sure I do."

"But what about me, then?" exclaimed Abraham, laughing. "You treat me as a pair of old shoes."

"What perfect nonsense."

"The Moor has done his duty, the Moor may go."

"He may, indeed," answered Clara, without the ghost of a smile.

But Abraham laughed. He would not take it for earnest; he would be happy. He had a son who was his; and he should get possession of him later. It was only fair that the mother should rule in the beginning.

There was only one person Clara permitted to have any share in the child. The Professor gained admittance at all hours, and numberless times he was summoned to come up the winding stairs, either for consultation, or just that his

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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grandfather might see how sweet little Carsten was in his bath. And the mother and grandfather could sit hour after hour over the cradle and laugh and admire the least contortion in the little face in which they discovered the smile of the whole world, family likenesses, and indications of intelligence, while the child, to tell the truth, resembled strongly a sick monkey.

The Professor was so taken up with this baby that he brushed the dust from some of his medical books and began again the study of diseases of children. This little creature, who was to bear his name, was his pleasure and delight. And when the far-off sound of a baby's cry from upstairs reached him in the perfect quiet of the big office he would lean back in his armchair and smile at the Goddess of Fortune, who, bending slightly forward and smiling in return, held out to him her crown.

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And Clara showed her baby occasionally to her friend Frederikke, because the latter had none, nor was there the least indication of such an event, and Clara was very proud of her superiority. But she had to admit that in the management of an economical household Mrs.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Frederikke far surpassed her. It was not at all necessary that Clara should economize, nor did she really, but she had inherited from her mother a passion for saving in butter and sugar, where servants were concerned.

Mrs. Frederikke taught her many tricks with suet and thickenings, syrup and chicory, and—above all—Liebig. And Mrs. Clara made it a matter of conscience to regale her husband and the servants with some most mysterious dishes, which they were obliged to eat.

At other times—when they had company, for instance—she spared no expenses. To be wasteful and extravagant when anyone was looking on was really her nature. On the other hand, hers was the refinement of stinginess, for while she allowed her cook to run riot in the enjoyment of oysters and truffles, she never neglected to count the prunes in the servants' sauce.

A visit, or, best of all, a party, at this house was a positively thrilling experience for Frederikke. Her bird-like eyes fastened themselves upon everything that was consumed, and made an estimate of what had been wasted; and after it was over she felt as if she had taken part in

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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an insane prodigality for which she must atone by the pettiest pinchings of parsimony. In truth, she did not envy her friend; it must be dreadful to be at the head of such a house, she thought. Not that Mrs. Frederikke was striving exactly to get rich or to own much, nor had she any special dread of the restrictions and privations of poverty—in reality, she needed so little. Her passion was to make sure that all the pennies that by any possible means could roll her way should come, and that not a single one should slip from her that by any possibility could be saved. She was a gold mine for her husband, and was much admired.

No; if she envied Clara Lovdahl anything, it was her husband. She must admire him for his contentment. When she heard of the kind of dinners the rich and coddled Abraham Lovdahl put up with, she was forced to think of her own husband. Indeed, he was not so easy to satisfy with warmed-up leavings and such things. But, then, Morten was not strong, and in his difficult calling he needed good, nourishing food. Therefore, a custom had been introduced into the preacher's house, that the head of it should eat dishes prepared exclusively for him,

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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while his wife, who, for that matter, required next to nothing, picked at something else which could hardly be honored by any particular name.

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As soon as Clara Lovdahl felt perfectly well again she was determined to make up for the long, painful and wearisome time she had undergone. She stirred up the old house—indeed, the whole town, and she kindled a blaze of sociability and festivity that spread to all quarters and illumined the entire winter with grand balls, torchlight processions upon the ice, champagne and rockets.

It was not alone Clara who caused the sedate town to stand on its head, but she struck the right chord at the right time, and a joyous echo answered from every quarter. Nor was it the rich exclusively, such as the Lovdahls, Withs, Garmans, but it reached away over among the people, and during this winter care was thrown to the winds. Not one troubled countenance was to be seen except Bank President Christensen's, which only increased the merriment.

At times there rushes just such an uncaged



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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spirit through small and remote human settlements, after a long period of sleep. It may be a prince, or it may be a country fair that sets the machine in motion, and so it goes on, parties and feasts following without intermission. Those who have a little money laid away take it out, and those who have none borrow at pleasure, and there is such wealth and prodigality that the surprised merchants order from Hamburg both champagne and heavy silk stuffs. But the champagne is never paid for, and when, many years after, a strange customer is astonished to find a handsome piece of silk in a dusty, half empty shop, the merchant answers with a sorrowful shake of his fallen head: "Oh, you see, that was left over from the prince's time."

This time, however, it was Clara who stirred up all the gaiety, but she had able assistants. First and foremost was the Professor, who looked upon it all as "*la haute finance*." Balls, concerts, and masquerades in the evening; and in the morning big sales, piles of letters, and dispatches in the office. He took part in all the amusements, and, indeed, it was he who encouraged Clara and helped her to get up new and piquant entertainments. Consul With was

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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also a worthy co-worker. His specialty was masquerades, and he had costumes enough to supply a theater. He was always willing to lend them if he could just only bring about a masquerade and get a meager bit of enjoyment out of the disguise. Evil tongues asserted that Consul With's enthusiasm arose from the fact that it was only under this skillful dissembling he was enabled to enjoy himself a little in the evening, inasmuch as his wife—they called her "The Ironing Board"—kept a sharp eye upon him. And it behooved her to do so, for Consul With's reputation was almost worse than Marcussen's.

And Marcussen also was launched into the social world by Clara. It amused her to keep him in a state of constant bewilderment. In the beginning, he had not noticed her otherwise than with a respectful admiration for the principal's pretty wife, but Clara soon gave him something else to think about. She knew very well all about Marcussen's life, and she knew that he was irresistible to the women of less fashionable society. Now she might amuse herself, the accomplished lady from the capital, by catching this handsome, awkward fish, in

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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order to see him flounder under her masterful handling.

And he seized the bait, but she jerked in the line too soon.

For, unrefined as Marcussen was, it was not an easy matter for a woman to fool him. And as he saw at once what Clara wanted to do with him, he became her respectful cavalier, but never at any time would he understand her little hints to approach nearer.

Clara was astonished and provoked. The village lion would not be tamed—but she would compel him. Thereupon her manner became so forced that Abraham once after a party ventured to say to her:

“I must say, Clara, you are spoiling that Marcussen.”

“What do you mean?”

“You make such an ado about him; he is nothing but——”

“But your father’s clerk! That is just what you were going to say; that’s what you mean with all your fine talk about liberty and equality. When it comes to the point, you’re an absurd aristocrat.”

“It wasn’t about his position I wanted to speak——”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Indeed, it was just exactly what you did want to do. I could see it in your face."

Abraham Lovdahl had been married almost two years, and he no longer disputed about such things, so he silently turned his attention to the newspaper.

But now Clara insisted that she must know about it, and she demanded that he should explain what he meant by his insinuations, by his reproaching her in such a way——

"Oh, come, come, Clara! Answer me; do you really think Marcussen is *comme il faut*?"

"He is handsomer, much handsomer, than you."

"Everyone according to his taste," answered Abraham, gaily. He knew very well that he was handsome enough, and that she only said it to tease him.

"But do you think he is refined?"

"I tell you what! I know some husbands who could learn respectful manners towards women from Mr. Marcussen."

"Do you think those gallant tomfooleries would be suitable in a husband?"

"You might try. But now I want to know why you are reproaching me about Marcussen."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“His reputation ——”

“I know; most men have a somewhat damaged reputation. You are a fine one to cast the first stone!”

“I will not discuss myself, but I wonder, Clara, that you, who see so clearly when you care to, do not detect the innate coarseness that sticks out all over Marcussen from head to foot.”

“You are jealous — yes, you are ——”

“Oh, no, indeed I am not jealous — no!”

“Don’t you believe that I—for you say yourself that I see so sharply—don’t you think that I can see jealousy sticking out of your eyes? That is a fine trait of yours! Do you remember the time when you talked in high sounding strains about equal rights, and the same standards for men as for women, the mutual confidence ——”

“Well, what of that?”

“What of that? You’re a fine eman—eman-cipationist!” cried Clara; “you’re not a whit better than all the rest of the horrid men, while you demand of your wife ——”

“What do you mean, Clara?”

She turned towards him, and her pretty, blue eyes became as cold as steel.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Grete Steffensen!" she said, in a whisper.

Abraham started at the sound of the name, and she seized upon this immediately.

"Yes, you see I know all about it, and no doubt you think it very proper to come here with your hateful and ungrounded jealousy, when you yourself have such a thing on your conscience."

"Are you altogether crazy, Clara? She is a poor, blind girl ——"

"And, indeed, she must be blind to ——"

"To care for me?" continued Abraham, who, nevertheless, had to laugh as he filled out the sentence.

"That was not at all what I was going to say," answered Clara, and turned away. In reality, it was just what she had intended to say, but she stopped, feeling that it was too ridiculously silly. In the meantime she regained her self-possession and said in her mother's tone of voice, as she passed Abraham:

"Be that as it may, I will not stand your jealousy. Take care of yourself and I will take care of myself. Good-night!"

After this conversation Abraham began to fear that evil tongues and slander might de-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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stroy his relations with Grete, and she had become quite indispensable to him. Little by little his affection for Clara was slipping away. He had realized very soon that it was impossible to retain the enthusiasm with which he had loved her in the beginning; but even then he was not fully conscious of how very far apart their lives were, for one of Abraham's characteristics was a reluctance to search for causes when he could conjecture that there was ground for unhappiness or alarm. In his need for devoted affection, which never found a response from Clara, Abraham turned to Grete—naturally and without any thought of wrong. He knew very well that he loved Grete, and he was happy in her innocent confidence; all other desires he had set aside with a determination to act on this point honorably and uprightly. And as he had, time after time, in the small matters of life turned aside when he should have gone straight forward, been silent when he should have spoken, his relationship with Grete became a refuge for the development of a necessity in his character, a necessity that had been dwarfed from childhood. He felt that he was her knight; she was altogether in his

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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power; but he would not abuse it. And yet, even here there was a shadow. When Abraham thought over his life, it seemed to him as if some inevitable destiny had pursued him, that he, who in reality was so anxious to have everything connected with him open and straightforward—that he, of all others, should constantly be confronted with equivocations, vexatious small matters, which in the beginning he had not taken the trouble to overcome, but had merely passed over, and which had since grown into serious troubles, pursuing and casting their shadow over him.

Why should it happen that he should lie to Grete? And he did not stop at the first. When he saw how happy it made her, he rearranged his whole life upon a somewhat enlarged scale, giving an account from day to day of his childhood and youth. The thread was true and genuine enough, but it was the embellishment that Grete cared for most. He related and felt ashamed, and related again until shame was worn out; and these long hours when he sat and pictured for her what he had done, and especially what he would do in such and such a case, became to him dearer than anything else. It



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## *Professor Loudahl*

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was not only that he enjoyed the pleasure of being near her, but the fantastic narrative seemed to be working out his deliverance. It patched up, in a measure, his hollow, empty life. So he soon became a master in this kind of composition, and Grete never tired of asking questions and admiring.

But in his own home Abraham had to make an effort not to feel that he was a stranger, for in the friendly relations existing between Clara and the Professor he was left quite to himself. He joined heartily in the amusements, but the thing he could not tolerate, and which caused him to fly from home, was the peculiar kind of piety Clara had taken it into her head to introduce into the house.

To give the season's sociability a grand swing, Clara had joined with some charitable women and had got up a splendid bazar, with a dance and a play. After that she contracted a taste for small, half-religious gatherings, with tea and a preacher. At first the Professor joked with his pretty daughter-in-law about the sudden piety, but very soon he seemed to regard it in a different light. He even consented to accept the position of president of a society

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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for fallen women in St. Peter's parish, from which post Consul With, for certain reasons, had begged to be excused.

That his father should take part in all these things was what Abraham could not endure. He knew so well the Professor's views on the subject of religion, and he could not possibly believe that this old man of science could, with an upright heart, sit and sing psalms with the women, and follow Clara to church — yes, and even to the communion. But he could not talk to his father about it, and, therefore, he kept out of the way. Furthermore, there was a restless activity noticeable in the Professor, which caused Abraham anxiety at times. The old man took part in all the gaities, and was at his office early and late.

One day he called Abraham to sign a check. Abraham took the pen and laughed.

"If you can get any pleasure out of my name, here it is. God and everyone knows that I don't own anything."

"It's merely a form," said the Professor quickly, and took the paper. "My name is the most important."

"Yes, your name is like Pharoah's cow: it

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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devours mine without fattening the least upon it."

"But your name, Abraham, will be as good as mine some day."

"Ah, father! I shall never be the merchant you are."

"We shall see, my boy," answered the Professor; but long after Abraham had left the office he sat lost in thought—in anxious, troubled thought.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### XII

"Mr. Bank President, now I begin to believe in earnest that you are working against me."

"Not at all, Professor! Quite the contrary. No one can be more anxious to come to your assistance than I."

"Assistance! Thank you, but I really do not need any."

"No, no! you misunderstand me; I merely meant that in advance of hard times——"

"Ah! this crisis is your fixed idea, Christensen! And you know I don't believe in it."

The conversation had lasted a long time, and both men were quite excited, each in his own way. The Professor's face was flushed and he played nervously with a ruler. Christensen was more composed; he merely sniffed a little more than usual, and looked around the office.

"All right, Professor Lovdahl! Crisis or no crisis, one thing is certain, and that is, Fortuna must pay up, and the sooner the better."

This came so suddenly that the Professor was struck dumb, and he sat a moment with a surprised expression.

"Is that meant for a joke, Mr. Bank President?"

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"By no means, unfortunately. I thought you would entirely agree with me; you must, however, understand the situation even better."

"Yes, I do; and I can assure you that such a contingency as you predict is out of the question. And now I must tell you something, Mr. Bank President Christensen. From the first day I became chief director in Fortuna you have done what you could to ruin me; and when you did not succeed you tried to injure the factory itself. For that purpose you came forward at the general meeting with all your apprehensions, and upon the same personal grounds you have driven the Fortuna drafts from your bank."

"Personal? — Professor!"

"Yes, I say personal grounds; for it all arose from your vanity, which could not tolerate my being made manager when Mordtmann went out; and now you know it."

The Professor was quite beside himself, and walked up and down the floor. Christensen felt his nose, and smiled slyly behind his hand.

"We two will not talk of personal vanity, Professor Lovdahl. It would be better if we should try to meet the misfortune together.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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This factory is an unfortunate undertaking; let us begin by acknowledging that."

"Not at all! I will on no account admit that. The factory is good, and well conducted; but the state of the market has been exceedingly unlucky."

"Well, then, I am obliged to tell you right out, Professor, that my errand here to-day was to prepare you, for I intend at the next general meeting to introduce a motion for the winding up of the factory."

"All right! all right!" answered the Professor, and he turned and went over to the middle window.

He was so excited that for a time he did not understand; but as he stood with his eyes fixed upon the garden, where the crocuses began to peep out along the borders, the situation, with all its dangers, became clear to him.

Fortuna's position was, unfortunately, very bad; no one knew that better than he, who, with great personal sacrifice, had kept it alive and in a seemingly prosperous condition. It was not impossible that the shareholders, when they had full information as to how it stood, would prefer a liquidation, and then he would be held

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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responsible for the losses of his townsmen; his high position and the homage that had been so indispensable to him — all gone.

But something much, much worse stood out in dark outlines before him. If the factory should fail, his name would be almost ruined, his credit receive a blow; the greatest difficulties might arise.

Carsten Lovdahl felt himself getting weak in the knees. It must not happen; the times were indeed threatening, but all could even now be changed if he could only have time. For a moment his courage sank so low that he thought of humbling himself, and of begging Christensen to withhold the proposition. But as he turned towards the bank president, who was putting on his gloves slowly, a good idea came to him.

“As you are so anxious about your *Fortuna* shares, I suppose I had better take them. How many have you at present?”

“I have ten; but I cannot expect the Professor to take still more——”

“Oh, don’t be anxious on my account,” said the Professor, and laughed superciliously, “the five shares I bought before from you I sold really in half an hour’s time at an advance.”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Indeed?" answered Christensen, politely.  
"Will you take the shares at full value?"

"At par, as the last, of course!" answered the Professor; "and so I hope you will see that your proposal of a liquidation is, to say the least, untimely."

"There will be no more question of that proposition, and, as I am no longer a shareholder, I shall, as a matter of course, withdraw from the direction at the next general meeting."

This was an unexpected turn of affairs. Should Christensen cease to be a director in Fortuna, after he had sold all his shares, that would be as deadly a blow to the factory as his proposition would have been.

The Professor made a deprecatory movement.

"No, no, Mr. Bank President; not in that way. You did not understand me right. When I took your shares it was not done with any idea of immediate profit — you know that very well; I did it out of interest in the factory. I wish to ask of you, in return, that you not only withhold your proposal, but that you will also support the management — especially me as



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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principal, and that you will act in the whole matter at the general meeting in such a way that, in spite of the unfortunate business year, the shareholders' confidence in the factory may not be diminished."

"Yes, but I can't very well act in any way whatever when I am no longer a shareholder."

"Then keep a couple of shares," said the Professor; but as he could see at once that Christensen insisted upon getting rid of them all, he swallowed his chagrin and continued: "Or else let me take all ten, as I first proposed, and leave two or three untransferred, just for form's sake, at all events until after the next general meeting. This is an entirely private transaction between ourselves, and has nothing to do with the interest of the factory that you helped to establish, and whose prosperity lies so close to your heart."

"That is very true; I only wish that you will not demand more assistance from me than my convictions will permit."

"Do you know, my dear Mr. Christensen," said the Professor, half in joke, "that you are, indeed, a very apprehensive man ——"

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## *Professor Loddahl*

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- Hadn't we better say a cautious man, Professor?"

- No, let us say an apprehensive one, that's just the word. But when you see that I, who, according to your own statement, must best understand the situation — that I do not hesitate to take ten additional shares, it must, indeed, satisfy you that the enterprise is considerably better and more promising than you believe."

"Yes, you are certainly right, Professor! I must admit that you, with your scientific training, are the one who can judge best in the matter, and I shall regret exceedingly should you not be repaid for all your work and sacrifice with a corresponding good result. I shall do all in my power."

All at once the two men became very cordial, and parted after shaking hands heartily.

In the door Christensen said mildly:

"I shall expect, then, that our business may be settled in cash to-day? I know the Professor's business maxim."

"Half in cash and the rest in three months' time," answered the Professor.

"Three months' time," repeated Christensen, hesitating a little; but a glance at the

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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other's face convinced him that the limit had been reached. There was nothing more to be gained here, and he changed his tone adroitly:

"Yes, that is, of course, just the same as cash. The paper upon which Carsten Lovdahl's name stands is as good as the Bank of Norway's bills. Good-morning, Professor," and they bowed and smiled at one another.

"Marcussen, we will pay five thousand crowns cash to Bank President Christensen this afternoon. You will have the amount ready."

The undaunted Marcussen, who never blinked, became, nevertheless, somewhat perplexed this time. Already every day had worries enough of its own, and it was no joke to produce, as if by magic, five thousand crowns in addition to all the other things that had to be met and paid, and, besides, the day was more than half gone. But the Professor had become so impetuous and hot-tempered of late that Marcussen, who loved peace, was in the habit of making it appear that everything was going as smoothly as butter. So he merely said:

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“Hm! Five thousand crowns! All right, Professor.”

Marcussen was admirably suited for the way in which Lovdahl's business was conducted, and he managed from day to day to meet all exigencies without a thought for the morrow, and the scarcer money was the richer he became in invention. He was accustomed to slip through troubles of a much worse kind: jealous women, betrayed girls, mothers-in-law against their will, alimony, preachers, and exhortations; compared to these, the troubles of the office were as child's play for him. To meet papers falling due with new ones that had the appearance of value, to transfer right and left — keeping the increasing debt in constant circulation, which appeared to be a lively transaction — this was just the work that suited Marcussen. And when he dabbled with money and values, it was not because it belonged to others that he was careless, for he would undoubtedly have conducted his own business in the same way had he had any. Marcussen was very much attached to the Professor and his house, and wished with all his heart that everything might be as brilliant and successful as possible. Good-natured and

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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accommodating, Marcussen would have liked that all men might be rich, just as he sincerely desired that all girls might be pretty.

The Professor, on his part, worked, too. He had now gone so far that he *would not* be anxious; he would not notice that the whole business life was languishing and growing less; he would not look forward longer than from day to day. But, on the other hand, he set himself with all his ability to stem the receding tide. He made large purchases, took everything that was offered him — corn, coffee, fish, salt — and sold again, without scarcely a thought about loss or gain — merely to keep things moving, and to feel the money roll through his fingers. The feverish energy displayed by one man spread its contagion over a large sphere, and a spirit of speculation, a period of the wildest stock gambling on a small scale, cast its counterfeit, short-lived splendor over the little corner of the world where Carsten Lovdahl reigned supreme. The more he extended his operations, just so many more names he drew into the circle of his indorsements, and, as all transactions were conducted by means of checks, very soon there was not a house of any importance in the

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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city or neighboring towns that did not stand upon paper together with Lovdahl.

But so long as the banks and foreign countries discounted without a murmur, the manner of getting money was so easy that few or none had the strength of mind to stop in time — not even when the discount began to rise, and this money, with which there had been such free speculation, had become in reality so dear that there was very little chance left for making anything. Neither did anyone seem to feel that there was any cause for anxiety on account of the foreign news, that one article after another had fallen fifty per cent. “on change” in a week. It began with petroleum, then millions disappeared in railroad bonds, afterwards coffee and sugar went to pieces; but no one seemed to think that there was danger for everything and everybody.

There were not many noses like Bank President Christensen’s, and confidence in Carsten Lovdahl was so firmly grounded that no one thought of rejecting his name. Besides, it would have required more courage than usually is to be found in the merchant ranks, for Lovdahl belonged to the “Ring,” which ruled both the

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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bank and the town. An unguarded word against one of the influential ones might prove sufficient to cause the offender to be gently laid aside, cast adrift and forgotten. And he who was not strong enough to stand alone would soon shrivel up and disappear altogether, all sources being closed to him. Therefore, nothing was heard but encomiums of the wonderful activity so rich in blessings to the town, the busy hands, the many mouths, and so forth, and in these praises fears were deadened and doubts were laid to rest.

Under other circumstances, the settlement for the year's business of Fortuna's joint stock company would have been an event to call forth reflection at least. The general meeting had been a most singular one. After a short and loose account given by Marcussen, the Professor had announced, with regret, that this year Fortuna would not yield any profit. It was a disagreeable surprise for everyone, and there was a feeling of general depression; a single dissatisfied voice tried, in a guarded way, to cast some reflections upon the management. Bank President Christensen sat silent, and an opinion that he was the originator of the dis-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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satisfaction spread through the meeting. Was it not well known that he hated Lovdahl? So they became more courageous, and it looked as if there might be a stormy meeting.

Christensen let them express themselves very fully before he arose. Then, however, he attacked the bewildered disaffected with such a masterful, confident and open discourse that the excited meeting became all at once as a smiling lake, in which the re-elected board might confidently see itself reflected.

After that, Christensen started once more on his yearly journey to Carlsbad, and took his nose with him. He knew now how matters would turn out at home, and he did not think that he was called upon to caution and prevent. When he had arranged his own affairs, and, to the best of his ability, had secured his own dear bank against the misfortunes which he scented in the air, it was with a tranquil mind that he saw his fellow-citizens ruin themselves, and he waited patiently for the time when he alone should be left standing, while all around the tottering and fallen would be begging him for help.

Carsten Lovdahl breathed freely after the



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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general meeting was over, and he saw with pleasure the Hamburg steamer go out of the bay with Christensen on board.

As summer approached, business became duller. People went away from home or else had visitors from other parts of the country staying with them. In the meantime drafts ran their accustomed course in and out of the banks; they resembled a sluice through which the stream rushes and roars at high tide, leaving later in the day a reservoir of the most deplorable emptiness.

The whole Meinhardt family was making a visit in the Professor's spacious house, and the increased establishment was conducted with such reckless prodigality that Mrs. Meinhardt was in perfect ecstasies. The old, shriveled up Judge became in the meantime anxious and began to sniff and peer into matters. He made some calculations, and ended one day by proposing that the Professor should turn over some real estate to the little grandson.

Abraham had never laid any claims to being a business man; therefore, it made it much less difficult for the Judge to present the matter in such a light that the proposal should in no way

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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arise from want of confidence in the Professor. It was only to secure the family in the possession of the real estate for the time, should the business not be equally prosperous in Abraham's hands. In that way the Professor was induced to accept the proposal, which otherwise commended itself to him, and the two grandfathers composed many legal masterpieces of deeds of gifts, and deeds of conveyance, which made little Carsten a solid man, while he was toddling around upstairs and roaring because he could not have more cherries.

They did not let Abraham know anything about this, and he was entirely taken up with the workmen's matters. His constant theme was their building fund, which was growing so finely that they could soon think of building an assembly hall. Lawyer Kruse turned over the management to his younger friend, for Abraham was respected and liked by all.

Abraham no longer felt anxiety on account of the change he thought he had noticed in his father, and he concluded now, when everything was going so splendidly, that the constant restlessness was desire for action, and he could not help admiring the remarkable man

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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who developed greater strength with increasing years.

One day Abraham was in the office and his father called to him:

"Have you any ready money to loan us? Marcussen has no cash."

"I have nothing else, you know, but the savings bank money for the building fund and for ——"

"Well, bring what you have. We will put the amount back to-morrow or some other day."

Abraham hurried to get his box, which was in the office's fireproof safe.

"Just look here, father! Isn't that splendid? The building fund has nearly twelve thousand crowns, and the sick fund is not so bad, either ——"

"Good, good!" answered the Professor quickly, and seized the books.

"Will you have it all?" asked Abraham, laughing.

"No — we will take what we need to-day."

"And you must be sure to give my people big interest — considerable — when you pay the money back to-morrow."

"Certainly — to be sure," answered the Pro-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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fessor, who was already back at his desk, where Marcussen was waiting.

Now the last furious struggle had begun for Carsten Lovdahl. He raised money right and left. He availed himself of every opportunity to secure it, however insignificant the amount might be. He spared nothing, computed nothing, but with the assistance of the faithful Marcussen he fought his way from day to day. He strained every nerve to the utmost, bought all on three months' credit and sold, whatever it might be, at any under price, if only he could get cash for it. Old Abraham Knorr's government bonds were sent secretly to Hamburg for payment, and everything that he could scrape together of ready money was cast into abyss after abyss until, at last, the bottomless pit was reached, and all was over for Carsten Lovdahl.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### XIII

It was a cold, rainy morning at the end of autumn. The Meinhardt family had left the Professor's long ago, and Abraham had gone north on a business trip in the factory's interest.

An unusual stillness had hung over the town for several days, a breathless expectation, in which the most absurd rumors flew about at random; all tongues were ready to take hold, and in the absence of reliable information the most foolish reports, which no one believed, were circulated. The air was filled with those mute, intangible somethings from which gossip springs, and a presentiment grew and strengthened that something dreadful, unprecedented, was about to take place.

The workmen in Fortuna were anxious, and told one another that the factory was about to close. No one knew from whence the rumor came, but the more eager some of them were to deny it and to ridicule those who believed such nonsense, so much more strongly were the majority confirmed in their belief. An expectation of calamity was in the air. The directors in the different banks hardly dared look one another

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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in the eyes. For the last few days the most alarming inquiries had come from every direction; polite requests to limit certain accounts were received; at last telegrams came on the subject of further guaranty, or point blank refusals of credit upon several names.

It was one Monday morning, after an exciting week in which Carsten Lovdahl had about exhausted his resources in the way of large amounts, and, to some extent, had drawn upon entirely new papers. As far back as the Saturday before Marcussen had received some alarming telegrams, but, according to the custom of the house, he had laid them aside. Saturday was the night for the Professor's card parties, and Sunday was a holiday. But on Monday morning a pile of dispatches had collected on Marcussen's desk — a flock of damned vultures, he thought, as he took off his wet coat. After running through them, he began to lay them out on the desk in small piles, but at last he swept them all into a heap and slapped his big fist down on them. Rasmus approached with the large wallet to receive the usual orders for the day's operations in the bank, but Marcussen told him to go to hell and take his bag with

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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him. Thereupon, after thinking for a moment, he took up all the telegrams in one hand and went into the Professor's office, locked the door after him and drew the curtains. Carsten Lovdahl had been standing by the window, with his eyes fixed on the garden below. He turned impetuously and said:

"What is it, Marcussen?"

The Professor's face was almost ashy gray and his eyes were sunken in his head. He had not slept for several nights, and the effort of the last few days to hold out against all hope, the wild plans, the horrible certainty that came pouring in from all quarters—all this had turned the strong, stately man into a hunted criminal.

"What is it, Marcussen?"

Even the voice was changed—raucous, as if from an animal unfamiliar with human speech.

Marcussen trembled with emotion. He laid the dispatches in front of his chief. Lovdahl sat heavily in his chair.

"Telegrams!—all of them?—from Donner?—from Christiania? What does this mean, Marcussen? Why do you bring me all these helter-skelter? Haven't I told you that it is

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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your business, and not mine, to attend to the daily arrangement of the papers? Answer me, man! Don't stand there like a stick! What does this mean?"

"Professor Lovdahl," answered Marcussen, and tears stood in his eyes, "this means that we cannot go on any longer."

"What does he say?" shrieked the Professor, jumping up. "We can't go on any longer, you say? You mean—you mean, man, to assert that I—that Carsten Lovdahl is a bankrupt!"

In a flash his dull eyes ran around the room as soon as the word was spoken—this word with which he had struggled day and night for the last year; this word that never left him, that rose to his lips as he sat alone in his office, which suddenly sounded in his ear when merry guests praised his wine, and which he read in the eye of every man who greeted him on the street.

"Hush! hush! You have locked the door, haven't you? Lock the door, Marcussen! We must not lose our heads; we must find a way out. All cannot be lost—impossible! Let me see—let me see these dispatches—all!"



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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And the old man took up the papers, which rustled in his trembling hands. He looked now in one, now in another, spread them out over the desk, then collected them together again, until he sank down with his head in his hands and moaned aloud.

Marcussen said afterwards he would rather have been told he had twins than to have lived through such a moment.

At last he went over and laid his hand on his chief's shoulder. The Professor looked up and arose with difficulty.

"Go, Marcussen!—and admit no one to me."

During the morning business was apparently being carried on as usual. Brokers and agents came in and talked with Marcussen; orders were sent out to the factory, and the cashier sat behind the railing. People came and went with money. But little Rasmus crept into a corner and stared intently at Marcussen. He could not understand why he was not to go to any of the banks with even a single paper, and he pondered over the meaning of it all.

At one o'clock Taraldsen came trotting in. He was the old messenger from the Bank of

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Norway, and always ran, taking little bits of steps and swinging his arms. He stood in front of Marcussen's desk and bowed. An uncertain smile quivered in his old face as he said:

"It is — hm! — of course an oversight?"

"What?" asked Marcussen, dryly.

The smile disappeared entirely, and, breathless with suspense, Taraldsen asked:

"Will your drafts not be redeemed to-day?"

"No."

"Mr. Marcussen, people say you are a joking man, but this ——"

"I'm not joking — confound it!"

Old Taraldsen straightened himself. Every man sat bent over his desk. Little Rasmus's eyes alone met his. The boy was pale with fright; he began to understand. It was getting clearer for old Taraldsen, too; but all at once he became again bewildered, for he appreciated the full extent of the calamity. He carried the banking business of the whole town in his head, and although he had seen a great deal of the same kind of thing in his long life, it had been of small importance compared to what was about to happen now.

With a trembling voice he asked, solemnly:

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Will Carsten Lovdahl's papers be protested?"

"Yes," answered Marcussen, without looking up.

Old Taraldsen trotted out of the office, and on the stairs he met the messenger of the Joint Stock Bank.

"Is it true, Taraldsen?"

"Now the whole town is ruined," answered the old man, flinging out his arms.

"Is it true? Is it true?" flew over the town in every direction. And when it was known to be a certainty, everything stood still; all work, all discourse, even thought was paralyzed. The news engrossed everyone, even down to the children, who with big eyes and frightened faces asked one another: "Have you heard that Lovdahl has failed?"

At one o'clock the Stock Exchange assembled. This had come so suddenly that Consul With, who was completely ruined in Lovdahl's failure, was only prevented from being present by meeting accidentally on the street one of the directors. He turned around, went home and locked himself in his office.

In the Exchange all was quiet, and people

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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went about without looking at one another; they all seemed to have suddenly become hollow-eyed and haggard. The benches up in "Millionaire Corner," as it was called, stood empty, and the members of the "Ring" who were present preferred to-day to stand in a group on the floor. Not once did Garman and Worse sit in their accustomed place; and these empty benches crept, as it were, in dumb fright along the walls and around the whole room; no one dared seat himself, as if fearing a general overthrow that would demolish everything and cast them all below.

Some of the young merchants tried to be gay, but they soon gave it up; and when their voices were subdued to the mumbling tone of the others the silence became doubly weird. One of them, who could not stand it any longer, looked at his watch and took himself off, and in three minutes the hall was empty. But all afternoon troubled men sat in their inner offices and searched in books, made notes, calculated and shook their heads. The directors were assembled in all the banks; the news was brought in by messengers, and each account was worse than the last; the telegrams were no better, and

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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the poor directors, every one of whom was likely to have troubles enough of his own, began to tremble for his bank, seeing that circle after circle had been drawn in and engulfed in the whirlpool in which Lovdahl was the first to go to the bottom.

Dispatches in search of Christensen were sent from his bank all over Europe. He had taken a rather long "after cure" in Italy, and it seemed as if the whole town felt relief when the news came that he had left Hamburg and was on his way home.

By five o'clock it was known that besides the innumerable poor people who were ruined, of the larger failures were the following: Carsten Lovdahl, together with Abraham K. Lovdahl, Joint Stock Company Fortuna, C. R. With, Randolph Bros. and George F. Kruse.

That the Randulphs followed Consul With was to be expected; there was a relationship; besides, they had associations in common. But the consternation was beyond all description when *he* went — old George Kruse! It was not only because he had been supposed to be very wealthy, which in reality he had been; but that such a cautious little huckster, of whom no one

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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believed that he would under any circumstances venture ten crowns upon an uncertainty — that he now should find himself mixed up in all of Lovdahl's most desperate affairs, with a liability that swallowed up everything he owned, and perhaps more, too. Indeed, when that was known, the utmost limit was reached, and people became weak from horror. And with Kruse the misery extended far out of the town. He was the farmers' merchant, and should the lawyers, with their accustomed speed in cases of bankruptcy, press the payment of all the loans and claims, many of the debtors would be driven from house and home in these hard times.

While the great misfortune was creeping stealthily as a fire in a peat bog, slander's monstrous loom was weaving a variegated web of malice and spite. The long-pent-up desire now seized with frenzied appetite upon the rich material, and everyone — except those who were so personally affected that they sat in mute despair — took up the thread and talked incessantly, as if life itself depended upon keeping the tongue in motion. And the topic, rich as it was, did not suffice. They were not satisfied to

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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follow events as they came, blow after blow, but they hurried on with presentiments and prophecies, and it seemed as if they could find no rest until the depths of despair had been reached for all. Some gave vent to their feelings by digging out all Clara Lovdahl's silk gowns and getting angry over each one separately, in order to refresh themselves with the thought that now she did not own a thread upon her back, if law and justice were only carried out. There were others who were more good-natured and who sat and pictured to one another how they must feel—these people who had been so enormously rich, and who now, literally speaking, were brought to beggary, ruined, turned into the street. There were still others who could have no peace for thinking of these millions that were lost. Who had got them? They certainly must be in some place! Where on earth had the big pile of money gone? They would like to know that.

There was sympathy, too, but of an exceedingly mixed kind; and many a small tradesman who had escaped the great downfall thought even that his beer tasted particularly good to him to-day. But still below all these—among

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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the laborers and those who lived from day to day by the work of their hands for others — there was, as a general rule, perfect silence. Only a few relieved themselves in curses and the worst kind of abuse of the rich who live in revel and riot and let the workman slave, to leave him some fine day stranded, without work or wages. The majority, however, kept quiet and admonished wife and children to restrain their bitterness. For they knew by experience how capital, when it is flourishing, presses labor to the utmost; and they knew, also, that they never were more completely the slaves of that same capital than just when the evil day of retribution for gross fraud and speculation arrived. And they well knew upon whom the heaviest punishment would fall. They saw threatening them a life without employment, uncertain work, half working days perhaps, and long, hungry, unoccupied hours; small sums borrowed here and there, credit with the shops all gone, then the pawnbrokers, and, driven to the verge of despair, the waiting-room of the guardians of the poor. For that reason they sat still and enjoined upon their families to keep themselves quiet, that their



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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complaints might not be heard by that formidable power, Capital—never so much to be dreaded as when it rushes on as a landslide, crushing the poor people under its weight. They demanded nothing but work; every muscle was ready to stretch itself to the utmost to do whatever might be required—they would be thankful, besides. Anything but to sit here getting faint from hunger and wretched food; to go out in the morning to find something to do, and to come home in the evening to meet the big eyes of the children at the door, watching to see if father had a loaf of bread under his arm.

Naturally, old Steffensen tried to stir up the troubled waters, but when he railed against the board of managers, the directors, and the whole set of them, a party of men from Fortuna nearly put an end to him. After that he disappeared.

No, no! Professor Lovdahl was an honest man, and so was the young Lovdahl; no one should say anything against them. Perhaps they would get on their feet again; such things had been seen before. Indeed, a few even pitied those rich people, who were now no better off than simple workmen. There were not many,

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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however, who agreed with this, because they all knew how peculiar it was about rich people who are born in purple and fine linen. They remain in these clothes, no matter what happens. One could even hear that they had lost everything and ruined others besides, yet it never came to pass that such people could get down to the level of the working classes, live with them and work with them. They continued to wear frock coats, eat warm food and smoke good cigars, so, indeed, they couldn't have suffered such dreadful hardships. And this was the incomprehensible part of Capital, and, therefore, also the most awe inspiring; truly, it must be God's will that there should be this great distinction, and that some had to work for others and continue to do so. But, at the same time, there was retribution for all this. They would have to suffer the pangs and tortures of hell's pit for the short life of wealth and luxury spent here on earth. Remember the rich man who implored the beggar for a drop of water; but he didn't get it; no, they would suffer torments — all these high and mighty ones — they could be pointed out name by name, down with them into the fire, there to burn to all eternity — think, forever!

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## *Professor Loudahl*

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But however much the preachers may have preached on the subject, not everyone could find consolation in this thought. Many felt it would amount to about the same if there was not such a roaring fire piled up under the rich in the next world, if only the poor could get off with a little less freezing in this. And then there were some rich people it would be a sin to burn. And could wealth really be such a deadly sin when the whole world was striving for it? It didn't hang together well, when one really took hold of it; no, there was something wrong some place, wherever it might be. And this was also the result of want of employment—all the cursed thoughts one got into his head from sitting and staring at the wall. Too much thinking was not good for poor people. Wouldn't it be better to suffer and be silent? To hope—hope, and, above all things, not to taste strong drink.

Such was their condition as winter approached. But when all this excitement was at its height, he who was the immediate cause of it all sat alone in his large, imposing office. He was not sitting in the armchair facing the Goddess of Fortune, but was far away at the mid-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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dle window. Carsten Lovdahl had sat there by the hour, staring down into the closed garden. Sometimes his jaded thoughts were so benumbed that he almost slept; at other times the misery, shame and humiliation stood out so flamingly before his eyes that he covered them with his hands. He had battled with his wife—those unavoidable eyes had been there and pierced into his very soul;—and, vanquished for the last time, he gave up the struggle, rejoicing like a coward that those eyes were closed.

But there were other eyes he would have to meet: Abraham, Christensen, Clara—and the whole host whose money he had scattered to the winds. How—how could he endure it? How could he possibly bear up against such a disgrace? Something kept drawing his thoughts to a way out of it; but he cast this aside at once. He would not do that; and again came crowding upon him every detail, with the shame and humiliation; the far-off, insignificant beginnings, which had grown and increased until the enormous, overwhelming mass had rolled over him, crushing him beneath its accumulated weight.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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But, nevertheless, might it not be possible to hold his head up again? He was always Professor Lovdahl of the University, a man of science. He had suffered shipwreck here among all these shopkeepers—well, he was no longer rich, but he was something more than a mere moneyed man.

Ah, no! It would never do to hold his head high. On the contrary, he must be as humble as possible, in order to come out even tolerably well. There were too many things connected with his recent transactions which both creditors and magistrates would have to see with the blindest of eyes should they be passed over. He was not so situated that it would look well if he should put on a bold front; he writhed under it; but down, down into the dust, he must go. To let himself be trodden upon! to lie at Christensen's feet, shorn of the last vestige of power, from this time forth to have the air of a dog who licks the hand that strikes it. But, still, there was a weapon close at hand, a weapon he had to some extent been accustomed to use of late.

Professor Lovdahl knew his time and his community. He knew that in this time and in

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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this community, where Christianity really did not exist, but where everything depended upon keeping up an appearance of it; where every power was exerted for the suppression of frankness, in order to carry on the monstrous sham of counterfeit Christianity; where every honest impulse to give up the shameful farce was stultified—he knew that in this community hypocrisy was life's motive power. He knew that there is no greater power than the hypocrisy that never flinches; no integrity, no moral excellence can disarm malice or defend itself against suspicion as the hypocrisy that is never put to shame. He knew that he who could put on a full armor of this stuff, with which most men in part cover themselves, would be able to go through the purgatory that confronted him, gain a new foothold, and perhaps turn his shame into a glory which no one would have the courage to snatch from him.

But he hesitated. The last remnant of purity revolted against such a depth of baseness. He remembered his youth, his short, bright days of scientific study; he thought of Wenche Knorr, and he could not let himself go down into such a slimy abyss. But of what avail!

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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These thoughts came again and came again. It would not look suspicious. Trials had led so many to religion, and, besides, he had already been following Clara to church for some time, and had taken part in her pious meetings. And why? If not just because he had felt an undefined longing for a refuge when the possibility of the great misfortune began to dawn upon him.

And now he—a bowed down, old man—folded his hands: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

The greatest difficulty would be with Abraham. He could manage the others—he felt that. And still he did not deliberately intend to be a hypocrite; but the little back door in the wainscoting was flung open and the priest rushed in. He ran towards the Professor, deadly pale, and with great beads of perspiration standing out on his face.

“My money! My money!” he cried in a hoarse voice.

The Professor got up and was holding fast to the window frame. His lips quivered and his eyes were fixed upon the distorted face of the priest, but he could not speak.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“Father is ruined—I know that! But my money?—Frederikke’s money? That is saved—surely— isn’t it? Let me have it at once. What! You haven’t got it? It’s gone—lost—disappeared! Oh, wretched man! You have robbed us! You shall be punished—no—if you will only give me back my money!”

For a few seconds the Professor had been paralyzed. Now he lifted up his white hand, smiled sadly, and said:

“My dear Pastor Kruse, you know that I am, unfortunately, not in a position at present to give you back your money. But I can do something else for you—something that, perhaps, may be quite as good and beneficial.”

“What is it? Make haste! You know of some resource? Ah, God be praised!”

Morten Kruse’s whole body trembled. There was still hope; this remarkable man, in whom he had placed such blind confidence, might perhaps even yet have a rescue for him—for him alone.

The Professor laid a fatherly hand on his shoulder and said:

“I will pray to Jesus that He may help you.”

The priest at the sound of this name fell back



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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as if it had struck him in the face. The two men stood motionless, holding one another with their eyes; their common secret bound them. Which of the two had the right to speak the word to the other? Neither had anything to say to the other, and the priest's eyes were the first to fall. He seized his hat and staggered out. Carsten Lovdahl sank back into his chair; this was his first victory.

The afternoon shadows were creeping over the stately office; only a few yellow sunbeams found their way through the crumpled linden leaves and fell aslant into the room across the thick carpet over to the man at the window. A straggling ray flashed upon the table and struck the golden bronze "Fortuna," who, half inclining, held out her crown to the empty armchair.

. . . . .

There was but one house in the town where happiness reigned supreme.

Mrs. Bank President Christensen hung on the neck of her recently returned husband, and, sobbing, begged forgiveness because she had so shamefully misunderstood him. And, half senseless from emotion, she lay and fabulized to

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*Professor Lovdahl*

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him all she was going to buy at the Lovdahl auction.

It was quite a tableau.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### XIV

Clara was informed of what had happened in the following manner: She thought the servants were very strange, but when she questioned them the only answer she received was that there certainly must be something going on in the office. Her curiosity was aroused, and, being anxious about her father-in-law, she sent a messenger in search of Marcussen.

Mrs. Clara had on a pretty brown gown. Marriage had rounded out the pale, anæmic ballroom belle into a blooming, fascinating woman. Marcussen had been in disfavor for a time; now he should have a little sunshine again. Mrs. Clara went towards him, and, smiling, held out her hand.

Never had Marcussen been less inclined than to-day; but his breath was nearly taken away, she was so beautiful, and for a moment his eyes glowed with such admiration that even Clara, who was not easily frightened, had to look away.

"Come, sit down, Marcussen. It is so long since ——"

They sat down on her little sofa under the inevitable fan palm, and Marcussen, like a good

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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hunting dog put on the scent, was all attention, forgot the day's troubles, expectant, and wondering how far this splendid specimen of womankind, about whom he had been dangling for so long, was going to admit him into her good graces.

"But you must tell me, first, what has happened in the office to-day? The servants said something was going on."

Now was the very mischief to pay! Marcussen was rudely awakened from his incipient dream; he swore and jumped up from the sofa and forgot his fine manners altogether.

"What's the matter with you, Mr. Marcussen? Why are you pulling at my flowers? Let them alone, and come and tell me what's the trouble. Possibly one of your own little affairs — and right out in the office, too. But tell me what is it?"

"No, I swear, Mrs. Lovdahl," broke forth Marcussen; "this time it's not any of my affairs — I only wish that it were! No, no! it is worse, a thousand times worse. And, believe me, I am so dreadfully distressed both for the Professor and for you — yes, and for your husband, too."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“Good heavens, Marcussen! You are crying! What is it? Answer me!”

“Well, there’s no use concealing it from you. We have failed.”

“Failed! Who? What? I don’t understand a word.”

“The business—the house—Carsten Lovdahl has failed.”

Mrs. Clara gave a shriek that sent Marcussen flying towards the door. That was the one thing he positively could not stand: women who shrieked.

The maids came running in. Clara lay on the sofa, in a fit or something of the kind, and was quite unconscious.

The Professor would not go up. He gave orders to send for Doctor Bentzen.

The first sensation Clara experienced when she became conscious was one of rage against those who had brought this upon her; not so much for the Professor, he always overawed her.

But Abraham!—that booby of a man!—and he was not even rich! She had been deceived, sinned against! And her clothes!—her jewels—what? Didn’t they sell such things

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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when people failed? Yes! she knew that; but hers! My God, she would go mad! Would she have to begin to be frugal, to vie with Frederikke in earnest? It was impossible—it was insanity! A telegram was brought to her. She flung it from her. Of course, it was from Abraham. It was to console her, no doubt; but she would not be consoled, least of all by him; she would not read the telegram—not a bit of it.

But a closed dispatch is not so easy to ignore, and when Clara had passed by it several times as she ran up and down the room, wringing her hands, she tore it open. It was from her father, and read as follows: “Keep up your courage! With prudence and care much can be saved. Will write further.”

A ray of hope! All was not lost! She had never known until that moment how much she loved her father. Much could be saved—saved! At once Clara became strong, resolute, enterprising. She had some idea about officers of justice, auctions and such things, but they were not very clear. She only knew that they were all hostile, and that one could and should cheat the administrators of the law. Her glance ran hastily around the room. Two massive can-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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dlesticks stood on the mantle. Like a raven she alighted upon them, flew into her bedroom and hid them in the bottom of her drawer, under her own linen.

. . . . .

The first among the sympathetic friends who had gone upstairs was obliged to prepare the others for a disappointment: Clara Lovdahl was not so crushed. Quite the contrary! She took it in such a lovely way. She had spoken of how they must now all work and live with the utmost frugality; she did not dread it in the least on her own account; really, she had never placed much value upon show and luxury. If only every man might get his due, she would be glad, and would not complain.

Abraham had started south on his home journey when he got Peter Kruse's telegram. It was brought to him on the ship when they had put into port. At first he could not understand; for a moment he even thought that it must be a foolish joke, but that was not like Kruse. And now, as he stood astern on the deck with the dispatch in his hand, he found himself suddenly alone with the pilot. All the others had disappeared, and it occurred to him

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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that his fellow-passengers had since yesterday acted very strangely toward him. Then he realized that it was but too true, and he hurried down into his little cabin. As the sea swished and swashed, foaming past the little round window, he gave himself up to the most painful thoughts, and tried to picture to himself, and to realize the great misfortune. First of all, he thought of his father; how he must have suffered for a long time past! Then, as all the sad consequences one by one rose before him, he sank into the deepest grief and despondency. The dear old home, the garden of his childhood, the thousand objects, every corner full of memories — to give them all up, to go forth empty-handed and to see strangers enter and take possession. And little Carsten would never play in the inclosed garden and throw stones at cats, as he had done. There would be no little pony, such as Abraham had fancied when looking forward to the boy's childhood. Little Carsten must go out into the world as the son of a man who could not pay his debts. It was really the first time Abraham had been thrown entirely upon his own resources. Before, he had always occupied his inherited place among the secure.



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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In this moment he knew himself to be without support, responsible for a son who must face the world's battles relying upon his father alone. And with this thought a wonderful strength seemed to be given him. Now at last the great opportunity had really arrived when Abraham Lovdahl could show his ability, when the problem was for the first time worthy of his purpose. Yes, now at length his time had come. Grete should be glad; even Clara should learn to appreciate him. And, first of all, just to get out of this trade!—entirely away from it. It had been a curse to them all—he saw that now. Let the creditors take what there was, and he would go out with empty hands to a life of honest labor. These thoughts made his head burn, and he was obliged to open the little window and cool himself with the salty spray that sprinkled his face. He felt so strong and full of hope. Already he could see their peaceful home in one of the little seacoast towns. The renowned Professor Lovdahl would take up his practice again, and Abraham would help him. It would be impossible now for him to take his degree in medicine; but he had graduated in the law; that, too, ought to be good for some-

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*Professor Lovdahl*

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thing. In this mood he arrived at home, four days after the failure.

Abraham went unrecognized up the darkest streets and approached his father's house through an alley behind the garden. All of the lower story was dark and the blinds pulled down. Upstairs, in his own suite, there was a solitary light. His heart beat faster; that was his little son's room. Downstairs in the hall it was so large and empty that he was startled. Suddenly he remembered the old cabinet where his mother had kept the table linen. It had descended from Grandfather Knorr and had been in the family more than a hundred years. Now it was gone. Probably it had been sent to auction. Perhaps it had been already sold. Abraham stood still and leaned against the stairs. It was a very bitter trial, this that he was about to go through. To see his most cherished objects, piece by piece, slip from him, and to have all that he held most dear from association go into the possession of indifferent strangers. He controlled himself, however; it was just as it should be—indeed, he was glad to see that it had begun. And he went slowly upstairs.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Clara and the Professor were there and were expecting him. These days had brought them nearer together, and, without the necessity of words or express agreement, they both, in their own way, tried to soften the misfortune and save what could be saved.

Clara's first blaze of anger against the Professor soon gave way when the bowed-down old man brought her some documents which showed her that little Carsten had long possessed more than his mother had any idea of. And the little scared hint that he let fall advising her not to show them at once to Abraham was quite unnecessary; she understood perfectly. Both were anxious and nervous and had dreaded his return — each in a separate way.

The Professor feared Abraham most of all. Up to the last moment he did not know how he should meet his son's eyes. Must he not expect that Abraham, with his violent temper, would come storming in with reproaches because his life had been wrecked, his future, his name, his honor — all dragged down in his father's ruin. There was nothing to answer to all this, absolutely nothing; it was too true. From the beginning he had brought up his son in absolute

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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dependence, and in admiration of him. He had hid to the very last everything that in Abraham's eyes would be likely to cast the least shadow over him. And now!—he knew no longer of any cover under which to hide.

Clara, too, was afraid of Abraham, but in a very different way; she also knew his disposition, but she took her measures in time. What she feared was that Abraham, with his propensity to overdo things, would give up the whole, throw everything into the hands of the creditors, make a clean sweep. She knew so well that he never would agree to save what might be saved, and, therefore, she had anticipated his coming home with great anxiety. He was very likely to undo all her work. Judge Meinhardt had written a letter in which he had said the same of Abraham.

Abraham Knorr Lovdahl had, as a matter of course, failed simultaneously with Carsten Lovdahl, but the son's estate was in reality an absurdity. He was co-responsible in nearly all the firm's debts, in so far as his name had been used lately on all drafts; in fact, he owned nothing but his furniture.

Therefore, there was almost a touch of hu-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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mor in the legal proceedings which took place in the rooms of the young people upstairs. Whether the creditors should receive one-half or one-fourth per cent. of this estate was really quite unimportant in the enormous deficit. But the young attorney went about writhing under Clara's escort; she insisted upon following him from room to room, in order to open all the doors and closets, and to show him what to write down. Only a few weeks ago he had danced with her here in these very rooms — he, a little, unassuming guest — and now he had to count her tea spoons! It was really more than one ought to demand of a well-bred young lawyer, and the sheriff took good care never to go upon such business himself. Under these circumstances, it was a rather defective inventory, and when the auction took place many sarcastic remarks were indulged in concerning this luxurious house which had turned out to be so noticeably destitute of silver and other things of value. There were others, on the contrary, who were strong in their assertions that Mrs. Clara had exposed everything to view, put nothing aside. One could well understand to what extent she had divested her-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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self when one heard that the deceased Mrs. Lovdahl's celebrated Japanese sewing table was to be sold, and she would have been allowed to keep that, for it was a wedding present from the Professor.

Whatever may have become of all the things, the rooms were certainly so bare and meager when Abraham came home that no one could have failed to notice it. Clara had arranged it in such a way that it was dark in the hall, where before a handsome gas fixture had always been lighted. The only light came through a pane of glass in the kitchen door. The dining-room was also dark and cold; they would eat in the sitting-room, that they might not be obliged to have fire in two stoves. She was quite sure that Abraham would notice these trifles, and she hoped it would serve her purpose. If one could only gain time with him and lead him to the right track everything would be won. Afterwards they could have both light and heat, and all the vanished articles could be brought down again from the attic, piece by piece — at intervals.

When they heard him in the front room, the Professor began to tremble so violently that he

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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was obliged to lay down the newspaper. But Clara got up and ran into the dining-room to meet her husband. Never before had Abraham been met by his wife in such a manner. He had secretly feared something quite different. From the time he had heard of the misfortune he had tried to think as little as possible about Clara. According to his ideas, she would be completely crushed, full of complaints — perhaps of upbraidings. And now she ran to meet him — affectionate, cheerful, almost kind; but so strangely unfamiliar in the black woolen gown without ornaments, and so pretty and dainty, nevertheless, as if poverty was just the state that became her most. His heart warmed; he was enchanted; and when he looked toward his father, who was waiting with trembling lips, a bowed-down old man, he threw himself into his arms.

“Oh, father! poor father! how dreadful it has been for you!”

“Can you forgive me, Abraham?”

“Don’t talk that way, father! Let us all forgive one another and begin a new account that will come out better — shan’t we?”

“Yes, with God’s help,” answered the Professor, with a deep sigh. The worst was over.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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For a moment all three stood hand in hand and looked at one another with a smile that was almost happy. This first meeting had gone better than any one of the three had expected, and each took hope, but from very different directions.

The maid interrupted them with a message from Lawyer Kruse, which said that Abraham must come to him immediately. The Professor gave a start and looked anxiously again at his son, but Clara said to the maid:

“Tell the messenger that Mr. Lovdahl has just got home; he is too tired from his journey to go out this evening. It is really very inconsiderate to send a messenger after you at once.”

Abraham thought so, too; it would be time enough in the morning. And now he began to look around.

“You are looking around, I see,” said Clara. “I have sent everything that is to be sold down into father’s rooms, where they will stay until the auction. I thought you would like that best, that nothing should be held back——”

“Of course, dear Clara. I am so glad you are so courageous and keep up a good heart.



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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You were perfectly right — shall I confess it? — it was more than I expected of you.”

“Yes,” she answered, with a resigned smile; “unfortunately, I know too well that you have a very poor opinion of me and always believe that I am absorbed in finery and ——”

“No, not at all! I never believed that; and if I have at any time done you injustice in my thoughts, you must forgive me now.”

Little Carsten came in to say good-night, wrapped up in his tiny bed quilt, sleepy and sweet; and then they sat down at the table in a cozy corner over by the stove.

“Well, you see, Abraham, we have nothing but bread and butter, and a piece of cheese in honor of your return.”

“It’s excellent, Clara! I couldn’t wish for anything better,” and he bent over to kiss her hand.

“Why are you looking around so strangely? What do you miss?”

“Is also — is mother’s sewing table —— Was that necessary?”

“You certainly would not have me keep that masterpiece?” asked Clara, sharply. “That surely would have given people a chance to talk.”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Indeed, I, for my part," said the Professor, "thought, too, that Clara might keep that with a clear conscience. It was a personal gift from happier days."

"No, father! Clara is right, nevertheless," answered Abraham, with an effort; "let us drain the bitter cup to the dregs! That was bravely done, Clara."

When they had eaten and were just about to seat themselves comfortably on the sofa by the round table, the maid came in again with a note for Abraham.

"What is it now? Is it that horrid Kruse again?" asked Clara.

"It must be something of special importance, as he writes I must go this evening. I suppose I shall have to go."

"Indeed, you ought not to at all. I am certain it will be time enough in the morning."

"No, Clara; remember, we are no longer independent. You have taken up your burden; I will not lay mine down. Humble ourselves we never shall, but submit we must. Isn't that so, father?"

The old man mumbled something, looking steadily at his son all the time, and when Abra-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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ham had gone towards the door and said good-night, it seemed as if the Professor was about to rise, in order to say something or to hold him back, but he sank down again and hid his face in his hands.

Clara followed her husband out and begged him, with many endearments, to come home soon; she would wait for him. It did not please her in the least that he should fall into the hands of this Kruse; he, too, had some foolish, extreme notions.

“Oh, Clara! how old father has become,” said Abraham, as she helped him to put on his overcoat; “and to think, I saw him tremble when he took the teacup! he who always had such a steady hand! Poor father!”

On his way over, Abraham was so occupied with this that he did not indulge in any reflections as to what Kruse wanted with him.

When they met, both were somewhat embarrassed. Kruse pressed Abraham’s hand cordially.

“Poor boy! It came upon you like a thunder clap; but I thought it best you should hear it from me——”

“Yes, yes, I thank you for the telegram; it was very thoughtful of you.”

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"I sent for you this evening, and you must excuse me, because I—to tell the plain truth—have been in the most painful anxiety the last few days—indeed, many others with me—and it delights me to see you so cheerful, for I know, then, that it's all right; but it was imprudent——"

"What do you mean?" asked Abraham, and a dark foreboding of something dreadful seemed to be closing his throat.

"What do you mean? Are you mad, boy? The money, of course! You surely have it—the workmen's money—the building fund—the sick purse?"

Abraham pressed both hands against his side, where he felt a pain as if someone had hit him in the pit of the stomach. His tongue was thick and it was with difficulty he brought out the sound: "Father!"

"Certainly—your father took the money out of the savings bank—we know that! But it was, of course, only a loan for a day?"

Abraham nodded.

"And your father handed the money back to you the next day?"

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Abraham remained standing, with staring eyes and open mouth.

“Great God!” shrieked the little fiery lawyer, “you are all a pack of scoundrels together! Your wife goes and hides all her silver — yes, I say it right out — steals! — and your father, your great father! — it’s not enough that he has ruined my father and a good many others; but I can tell you of a trick that will show what kind of a man he is. You told him that Mrs. Gottwald had saved some money — ”

“No!” answered Abraham; but he became scarlet, for, wretched as he was at the moment, he suddenly remembered that he had spoken one day at the table about the idea of a monument for little Marius.

“See!” cried Kruse, bitterly; “you remember it. Now, listen. Eight days before the failure your father was here and coaxed the bank book from Mrs. Gottwald, with the assurance that she would get higher interest! What do you think of that? Shall I tell you what he is — your great father? He is simply a swindler!”

Abraham fell back against a chair and for several minutes was unconscious. Kruse was

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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frightened and repented of his words. When at last he had succeeded in restoring Abraham, he said:

“You must not be angry with me, Lovdahl! But you can well see that this affair with the workmen spoils the greater part of my life.”

Abraham took mechanically his hand, but it was evident that he was still almost paralyzed. Kruse let him be quiet and walked, in the meantime, up and down the room.

After a long silence, Abraham said:

“What shall I do?”

“That depends upon what you can do.”

“Can?”

“What you have strength and courage to do.”

“You certainly don’t believe that I will be accessory to ——” He went no further; he was confronted with a look and a smile from his friend that he knew. It was half despondent, half contemptuous, and it stung Abraham to the heart.

It was true; he had neither strength nor courage to break loose from the others, and to say openly and candidly: “See here! My father has done this, my wife has done this, and I my-

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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self — punish us if it must be; but let us go and atone by a new life.”

He could not do that; he knew it himself. Abashed, and without looking up, he slunk away; and Peter Kruse locked the door after him.

There was but one thought in his mind, one name upon his lips; he went off to find Grete. He went so far through the silent, deserted streets that there were no longer gas lights. All along the edge of the road great stones were placed, and deep down he heard the sullen dashing of the waves as they struck against the rocks and rushed back again, sucking and tearing among the masses of tangled seaweed below. Abraham stopped and went back to the last gas light to look at his watch. It was past ten o'clock. Grete would be in bed, but no matter. He would just ask leave to sit by the bed, hold her hand and hear the voice in which there was neither doubt nor deceit.

As he turned to go farther on in the dark, he heard his name called, and a woman dressed in black came out of the shadow by the graveyard gate and hurried towards him.

“Don't go! I beg of you, Abraham! I beg

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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of you, for little Marius's sake!—don't go alone over there in the dark."

"But, dear Mrs. Gottwald, why may I not go?"

"Because I have seen this before; and if I had that time ——"

"When? Whom?"

"Your mother stood here, too. Don't go, Abraham; I can't stand it."

At first he thought that she was distracted from the loss of her money, but when she spoke of his mother:

"Answer me, dear Mrs. Gottwald! Answer me! What was the matter with mother?"

"Nothing. Don't question me. I know nothing."

"Answer me! You must answer me for little Marius's sake," and he held her fast. "What was it about mother?"

"I will answer and tell you all I know, but you must not ask me any more questions — poor Abraham!"

Now she was, as in the old days, Marius's mother, and he was Marius's best friend.

"I saw your mother standing here, just where we now stand; it was night, and dark as



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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now; she looked at her watch and then turned her face up towards the gas light. Oh, that look! I stood there in the shadow at the church-yard gate, and I did not go forward; I am what I am, and she was Mrs. Professor Lovdahl! but yet, I saw she was wretched and in trouble, and we both were mothers! Wasn't it dreadfully cowardly of me? And she died the same night."

"Died? Was it the last night? Where did she die?"

"Your mother died in her bed," answered Mrs. Gottwald, firmly, "and to-night when I was coming away from Marius just now, and was thinking about you and yours in your great trouble—and it was of you especially I was thinking, Abraham!—and when I saw your face before me—so like hers; and when you took out your watch and looked up at the gas light——; you understand, don't you, that I was afraid you were lonely and despairing?"

"But mother! Do you believe, Mrs. Gottwald—do you believe that mother——"

"I neither believe nor know anything; but people who are unhappy should not be allowed to go around in the dark. Come, follow me to the town."

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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She took his arm and they went silently over.

“Was my mother unhappy?”

“How can I know? What does one person know about another? What do we do but deceive one another? Some of us for evil, others for good. Besides, I did not know her so well; but she was certainly a rare woman, and just, therefore——”

“Therefore, you say?”

“Yes, dear Abraham; therefore, she was unhappy. It is usually so.”

He had to promise her that he would not go over again; but he did not keep his promise. It was impossible for him to go home, and he was not in any danger. He had no intention of jumping into the sea, or of shooting himself.

But he wanted to stand and listen to the mysterious ripple of the waves in the dark bay below, where the lights from the town came dancing toward him in scintillant streaks. Was it upon this dark way that his mother had thought of ending her life? Had she gone deliberately? What should he believe? He tried to recall his childhood; he could not remember ever having suspected that his mother was unhappy; now, for the first time, he remembered in what

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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a peculiarly sorrowful way she would say: "Poor little Abbemand!"

If his mother had had any grief in her life, it must, in one way or another, have been connected with her marriage; and what was the most agonizing of all for Abraham was that to-day everything had combined to dishonor his father — this father to whom he had looked up all his life, and regarded with a feeling that almost amounted to worship.

The great dissimilarity in the character of his parents, which he had but faintly suspected in childhood, stood out now clearly before him, and he knew also what part he should have chosen; that which had been crushed in his mother should have become his backbone; but instead of that, only an appalling waste remained, and through his ears rang Kruse's sharp voice: "You are all a pack of scoundrels together!"

Would it not be best to hide his disgrace down there, where it was so dark and still? Then all would be over, and they could say what they chose about him. But what would they say? He began to consider the consequences and paused at the thought of poor, fatherless little Carsten.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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Suddenly he turned away with a motion as if he despised himself. He knew he dared not, either now or at any other time; all the petty, dastardly steps by which he had gone down rose up before him—always down, down from his childhood to this hour. All the fine words, all the brilliant fantasies, all the weak, ineffectual efforts, the desire to be resolute and true, which had followed him always so mockingly; the possibilities he had had within his grasp; all the opportunities that had offered themselves—why—why had they all turned out a disgraceful succession of defeats?

In his despair he tore his hair with both hands, and cried aloud:

“What is the matter with me? What fiend possesses me, that I never—never can be worthy of myself? My life is a cowardly lie, a farce; it is as if every pore in me were poisoned.”

Grete! Grete!—now there was nothing else in the world; and he ran nearly all the way over.

When he reached the house it seemed to him that the door was standing in a peculiar way. He groped along in the dark and found that it

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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had been lifted from its hinges and set outside against the wall. There was not the usual odor in the room; neither was there—there was nothing. He went along the wall in the kitchen, in the bedroom, in the sitting-room; there was nothing, absolutely not an earthly thing but the straw and fragments which he knew he was walking in.

At last he stood by the bench under the window where he was accustomed to sit with Grete; it was fastened into the wall. Here he threw himself down. Steffensen had gone. He understood the whole thing; Grete had heard that he had taken the workmen's savings, and for that reason she had gone away. That was how it stood; the story was no longer.

The darkness gave way to the pale gray tints of the dawn, lighter and lighter. As the morning advanced the wind rose and rustled softly in the straw upon the floor. Over under the window, upon some remnants of Grete's willow twigs and reeds, Abraham Lovdahl lay and slept; he had slipped down from the bench.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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### XV

When the failures had at last come to an end, so that they could review the misfortune, a more tranquil state of mind prevailed. The first hasty judgment was withdrawn; the colossal extent of the misery, the great overturning and changes that had been predicted, all passed out of sight day by day, and life took about the same old form, but in more sombre hues. Hatred and forgiveness were focused upon certain points. As to Professor Lovdahl, there was not much to be said against him; the poor old man's hair had become white as snow in a few weeks. It was much more likely that his son had been the cause of it all; a free thinker and in league with Kruse to cheat poor workingmen. Indeed, the latter had had a taste of their love; and it was proved, it was said, that Abraham Lovdahl had forced himself into the Workingmen's Club just in order to get his hands on their money. Soon it was said that he ought to be in the penitentiary, both he and Marcussen; they were a well-matched pair, but Lovdahl was the worst, as he was married. And, besides, the girl was blind, and now she had been sent out of town; she *had* to be sent away—very

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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probably with a good, big pile of the stolen money.

Meanwhile it was noised abroad that President Christensen had said that there was — God be praised! — no talk of punishment for any of the bankrupts; and if his words had had weight before, they were quite overwhelming now, and were received by all with devotion.

Christensen's big form with its unfailing nose was now the only hopeful sign in the town. When he went with elephantine tread from his office to his dear bank, the frightened populace looked up to him as did the children of Israel to the brazen serpent in the wilderness. He was active in everything, ordered and arranged, calmed and smoothed the way, so that in the midst of the desperate ruin hope began to appear for one and all. The workmen thanked him with tears in their eyes, because they were allowed to work on his dockyard for about fifty cents a day; people in need of money came to him to sell treasures of all kinds; he had assistance for all, and it was said that in this year he had nearly doubled his fortune.

In the Kruse family the greatest changes were in the home of the old people. The priest

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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and his wife withdrew within themselves, kept their door bolted, and never betrayed by a word that they had lost money. The disaster had the effect upon Frederikke of making her redouble her parsimoniousness. She could not quite grasp the great loss; she could repeat, however, the big figures and shudder over them; but what still sent the greatest pang to her heart was upon discovering that the provision dealer had cheated her out of a few farthings. Morten, on the contrary, had received a shock for life. His calculations, his dear calculations, all laid waste — everything he had and all that he had expected to inherit from old George. He continued to calculate and calculate until he became so embittered that his sermons, which had not made much impression before, were said at this time to be very awakening.

But in the old people's house everything was changed; it was empty, lifeless, closed. As soon as Madam Kruse had recovered from her excessive and undisguised amazement she commanded her son Peter never to mention a word about Morten's guilt in the matter; she hoped that the misfortune might become the blessing and salvation of her youngest son. Then she



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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went to work, and two days after George Kruse's failure both he and his wife moved up into one of the three rooms in Mrs. Gottwald's house occupied by their son, the lawyer.

Old George nearly lost his mind when he understood the situation, but perhaps he never fully comprehended it, for his brain, which had always had its weak points, could not stand the terrible blow: that his life's work had been wasted. When Amelia Cathrine gave him an old cash book to figure upon, he sat with it the whole day until he was called to his meals. Only once he asked very mysteriously if it was Morten who stood in the shop now.

Thereupon Madam Kruse straightened her little figure and became quite gay. She and Peter put such speed into the fat lawyer Kahrs, who was receiver for the firm, that everything was sold and all was accomplished in a short time. And when it was known that the creditors had been almost fully reimbursed, Madam Kruse heaved no sigh for all the pennies she so faithfully had helped to scrape together. Her experience in life had given her a positive dread of money. Now she was just going to be happy, and she hoped others might be happy,

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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too. Her greatest sympathy was for Peter; he took it so very hard—this about the workmen's money. And Peter was not in the least to blame; it was that Lovdahl who had done it. Peter, however, would not listen to such a thing. He went about constantly brooding and reproaching himself that he had not kept the matter in his own hands. What his mother said did not make it any better, nor was he consoled when the workmen assured him that they did not reflect upon him in the least, and urged him to remain president. Peter could not forget this money, the increase of which he had watched with so much pleasure. This would have realized his pet dream; the workmen gathered in their own house, united and strong. Now everything was ruined, scattered—worse than before; distrust, cowardice, and all the old misery; they would have to go back to the very beginning.

He must be cheered up, thought Madam Kruse, and went immediately over to Mrs. Gottwald. As a matter of course, she had wormed the secret out of Peter long ago.

Mrs. Gottwald defended herself for some time, treating it all as a joke, but at last she became serious.

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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"Listen to me, Mrs. Kruse; we must not talk about this any more, not even in jest. If there were not a hundred other things in the way besides those you have mentioned, there would still be quite enough—and more than enough, if you knew my early history."

"I do know it, Mrs. Gottwald."

"I am not Mrs. Gottwald," she answered, as she bent lower over her work.

"I know that, too; but you have had a child."

"Ah, yes!—a sweet, little, unfortunate boy."

"Listen to me now, Mrs. Gottwald! The man I want you to love was just such a little, unfortunate child."

"I don't understand you, or else you don't understand me."

"Nor was his mother married either when he came into the world; tears fell upon his little head—such tears as you know. Yes, you look at me!—here she sits before you—his mother. We two, Mrs. Gottwald—we are alike!"

"My God! I never knew that!"

"Well, you see, in my case it was forgotten,

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## *Professor Loxdahl*

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because I was lucky and was married afterwards: but the shame remained with you for life. And I have begun to think that the disgrace cannot be so great in fact for either of us: we have both reproached ourselves too much—especially you. Yes, you are surprised, but I am in earnest: therefore, I have conquered my shame, and Peter, has, too.”

“Does he know?”

“Yes, I am certain he does: but I am still more certain he never in the deepest down corner of his heart had the least shadow of anything like contempt for his mother on that account. Nor would your son, either, if he had lived. What was it he was called?”

“His name was Marius, little Marius.”

“Well, then, Mrs. Gottwald, your little Marius and my little Peter, they were in a way brothers. You have lost your son, take mine instead; we will own him together—we two.”

Mrs. Gottwald both laughed and cried; it came so unexpectedly. But the old woman made her go with her upstairs and have a cup of tea. On the stairs Mrs. Gottwald stopped and hesitated, and wanted to turn back; but, as luck would have it, a man just then came up, and as

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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he turned out to be Peter Madam Kruse looked upon this as the hand of fate, and comforted herself with the thought that now the "young people" would certainly find one another.

Her troubles for the other son were of a different kind, and she had less hope there. Tomorrow she would prove him. He was to preach on her text: "Neither gold nor silver, nor copper shall ye have in your purses." Frederikke had told her that Morten felt it was his duty, just at this time, to rebuke very seriously the worship of mammon.

Madam Kruse would not care so much about the words; he was by no means so eloquent as Dean Sparre. But he was her son; she knew every cord in him; she could, indeed, hear if the true spirit was there.

It was the twenty-second Sunday after Trinity, and winter was at hand. The weather was sharp and piercingly cold, and without any invigorating frostiness in the air. People streamed silently to church, and hastened to find shelter from the whistling southwester. There were a great many people; adversity had driven those to church who otherwise never

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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went. Women were dressed in gloomy, contrite colors, not one gaudy ribbon was to be seen. Men sat despondent and struggled with their grief, and wondered if the worst were over or if it were only the beginning of greater evils. Among those who came was Consul With, who after his failure had been made bank director under Christensen. He followed his "Ironing Board" chivalrously to her seat, and was careful to see that her cloak was well wrapped around her. No one had ever seen that before; perhaps misfortune had drawn this married pair more closely together.

Then came Madam Kruse alone, bright and active, as if nothing had happened. Most certainly she had laid aside not a little—the old magpie—as she looked so untroubled.

But here come the Lovdahls. All heads are turned; all eyes follow them. Mrs. Clara, pale and with bowed head, walks along, beautiful and resigned as a martyr. The dark gown, the modest hat, have an unintentional elegance that is almost touching. With hat in hand, his white head a little to one side, and a smile that begs forgiveness from all—thus Carsten Lovdahl walks by her side. Mrs. Clara holds him by the

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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left arm, but with the right hand he supports himself upon his beggar's staff, which everyone can see, is of brown bamboo with an ivory handle.

The women sized up Clara. Yes, she was certainly much plainer, much simpler than before; nevertheless there was, when one looked closely, something about her that was irritating; she was by no means crushed. But the Professor was sweet; just think! his head was nearly white! And, then, the way he took it! — so humble, so resigned — it was an edification for the whole community.

Men indulged in reflections, especially over the agreement upon fifty per cent. which, it was said, Christensen would give Lovdahl on the many shameful transactions which were said to be brought to light by the directors. That was really too bad; everyone said it was outrageous when such things were allowed to pass uncensored. The authorities — from the highest to the lowest — knew all about it, by heaven! But where was the man who had the strength and courage enough to compel the authorities to see what they in no way *would* see?

The few who were still solvent were of the

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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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“Ring,” and the courts, the lawyers, the directors, and the remaining moneyed men combined more strongly than ever; and although all the rest of mankind united in the opinion that it was altogether inexcusable, the way things were going, still it was not possible to discover anything but that all was carried on most consciously and with full observance of the letter of the law.

Such thoughts as these followed Clara and the Professor up the church aisle, and all eyes were so intent upon them that it was some time before the congregation noticed that there was another coming up behind.

It was Abraham.

There are griefs—especially those brought about by dishonor—which make the thought of life insupportable. With the evening and the night come the thought that you *must* die before the light of another day. But the day breaks and you know that, nevertheless, life is still in you; you must dress, brush your hair, and you must eat. In the evening you say: “How is it possible that I have lived a whole day with this upon me?” Next day you shave; eight days after, you make a joke, and even laugh at it.



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## *Professor Lovdahl*

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In this way Abraham had lived for some weeks. The days and nights had tossed him to and fro. Nothing had become harder, nothing easier; but time was adjusting all things. In a certain way, he had never been so well off in his home; they treated him as a dear invalid. His father was so mild—almost deferential; and Clara heaped upon him all the tenderness of which he had dreamed before his marriage, but had never found. They were both afraid of him; a word—an outbreak of his exaggerated principles might overthrow all they had planned, wrench from them all they had saved. But, in reality, they need not have feared him longer; his spirit was broken. And when Clara, somewhat apprehensive, had whispered in his ear this Sunday morning: “You don’t know how happy it would make father if you would go to church with us,” he answered, quite calmly:

“Yes, I can do that.”

Nevertheless, he shivered as he went in under the arch, and the big old church, gray and sombre in the autumn tints, lay before him. Memories would thrust themselves; the mother’s eyes would come forth. But he cast them aside

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## *Professor Lordahl*

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almost without a struggle: they no longer sank into his soul. And as he followed his wife and father up the aisle he despised himself and cried inwardly:

“Look humble—look humble, hound that you are!”

How grim and sinister he looked! There was not one who had confidence in him. Women and men followed him with evil eyes—he who had robbed the poor workmen of their petty savings.

But here comes Christensen, the bank president, and his wife in a fine new silk cloak from Hamburg! Well, really, it positively did one good to see people who still had means to buy silk!

Mrs. Christensen smiled with emotion; the silver set was in its place, and the stupid inscription effaced.

The bank president's manner implied: “Don't worship me!” But he could not prevent that; he was their hope and refuge; not one had the courage to remember his last peculiar action in the Fortuna general meeting.

Then Morten Kruse began his sermon on the subject of the ten thousand talents. He told his

